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AN

INQUIRY

INTO THE

BEAUTIES OF PAINTING;

AND INTO THE

MERITS

OF THE MOST

CELEBRATED PAINTERS,

ANCIENT and MODERN.

By DANIEL WEBB, Esq.

The SECOND EDITION.

Ογις μη ασπαζεται τὴν ζωγραφιαν, ἀδικει τὴν αληθειαν, ἀδικει δε και σοφιαν ὁποση ες ποιητας ἡκει, φερα γαρ και αμφοιν ες τα των ἡρωων ειδη, και εργα· ——

Philostratus in exord. Iconum.

LONDON,
Printed for R. and J. DODSLEY, in *Pall-mall*.
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TO THE

Reverend Mr. SPENCE.

SIR,

THE moſt accurate obſerver of the beauties of nature, muſt be the beſt judge of their imitations; and the ſame elegance of imagination which forms the painter, muſt enlighten the critic. It was natural for me, under this perſuaſion, to addreſs my obſervations on Painting to the author of CRITO.

How ingenious are men in colouring their paſſions! thus have I heightened ſelf-love into a love of juſtice: For, what could be more

advantageous to me, than to have it known, that Mr. SPENCE approves me as a writer, and acknowledges me as a friend? What ſucceſs I may have in the former character, muſt depend on futurity; but I am in poſſeſſion of all the credit of the latter, while you permit me to declare, in this publick manner,

That I am, REVEREND SIR,

with the trueſt reſpect,

your moſt obliged,

moſt obedient,

and moſt humble ſervant,

DANIEL WEBB.

PREFACE.

IF we conſider the ambition moſt men have to be thought judges of Painting, and the eaſe with which they might really become ſo, it will appear ſtrange, that ſo few ſhould be found, who have any clear or determined ideas of this art. To account for this, and to point out thoſe errors which have been the cauſes of it, is the deſign of this Preface; after which, I propoſe, by the following work, to free this ſubject from its ſuppoſed

 difficulties;

difficulties; and to throw ſuch lights on the beauties and advantages of this amiable art, as may both recommend the ſtudy, and facilitate the knowledge of it.

I AM ſenſible, that, among my readers, there will be ſome, whoſe excellent taſte and clear judgment muſt place them much above my inſtructions; from theſe I hope for indulgence. The perſons for whom I write, are our young travellers, who ſet out with much eagerneſs, and little preparation; and who, for want of ſome governing objects to determine their courſe, muſt continually wander, miſled by ignorant guides, or bewildered by a multiplicity of directions. The firſt error, I have taken

taken notice of, is, the extreme eagerneſs, with which they run through the galleries and churches; *nimium vident, nec tamen totum.* A few good pictures, well conſidered, at ſuch intervals, as to give full time to range and determine the ideas which they excite, would in the end turn to a much better account.

THE ſecond error, is, the habit of eſtimating pictures by the general reputation of the painters; a rule, of all others, the moſt productive of ignorance and confuſion. For example; Dominichino may, at times, be ranked with Raphael; at times, he is little ſuperior to Giotto. And we often find, that the beſt works of the middling artiſts, excell the middling works of the

beſt. If then, we are guided wholly by the prejudice of names, we no longer truſt to our own ſenſes; we muſt acknowledge merit which we do not ſee, and undervalue that which we do; diſtreſſed between authority and conviction, we are diſguſted with the difficulties of an art, which is, perhaps, of all others the moſt eaſily underſtood. For, that compoſition muſt be defective, which cannot, to a careful obſerver, point out its own tendency; and thoſe expreſſions muſt be either weak or falſe, which do not, in ſome degree, mark the intereſt of each actor in the drama. In nature, we readily conceive the variety and force of characters; why ſhould we not do ſo in Painting? What difficulty

culty can there be in diſtinguiſhing, whether the airs of the heads be mean or noble; the ſtyle of deſign, confined, charged, or elegant; whether the proportions be juſt or unequal; the carnations, cold or animated? If the colours in a picture be happily diſpoſed, the general effect will be pleaſing; and in proportion to the force of the clear obſcure, the figures and objects will be flat or projecting, or, in other words, more or leſs like nature. If we conſider theſe points without prejudice, it will, I think, appear, that of all the arts, Painting is the moſt natural both in its means and effects. It is the moſt direct and immediate addreſs to the ſenſes: and this muſt be the reaſon, that the beſt writers

ters of antiquity, in treating of other arts, ſo frequently borrow their examples and illuſtrations from this. When I thus make light of the difficulties of Painting, I muſt be underſtood to ſpeak of its effects, not of the practice; and yet, even as to this, there are ten painters who have excelled in the mechanick part, for one who has excelled in the ideal. So that the ſcarcity of good pictures, ariſes not from a difficulty of execution, but from a poverty of invention. Hence it is, that painters of an inferior claſs, have, in their happier hours, ſtruck out ſome excellent pictures; and ſome again are ſeldom ſucceſsful, except when they work on the ideas of others: Andrea Sacchi is an example of the firſt, and Dominichino

nichino of the ſecond. But I am ſtraying from the deſign of this Preface, which was, to point out to the younger part of my readers thoſe errors, which tend moſt to defeat their knowledge of Painting. I have already named two, the third is, the haſty ambition of diſtinguiſhing the ſeveral maſters. With many, this precedes and often holds the place of all other knowledge; and yet, I will venture to affirm, that where this does not ſpring from a nice diſcernment of the beauties or imperfections of the picture before us, and thoſe too turning chiefly on the compoſition and expreſſions, it is an idle art, more uſeful to a picture-merchant, than becoming a man of taſte. It cannot be denied, that a ſameneſs of manner in treating

treating various ſubjects, is a weakneſs; it is a want of variety, both in the mechanick, and ideal: Yet it is by this very weakneſs, or ſome inſignificant particularities in the colouring, ſhading, attitudes, or draperies, that we ſo readily diſtinguiſh the ſeveral hands. It may be a check on this affectation, to obſerve, that among the infinity of painters, there are not, perhaps, a dozen, who are worth ſtudying: It is not by little circumſtances, that we know a Raphael or Correggio: Their ſuperior talents are their diſtinctions; Women of ordinary forms, are marked by the jewels on their necks, or the colours of their clothes; but a D——ſs of G——n is ſingled out by a pre-eminence in beauty. There is a fourth error which I would fain deſcredit,

and then I ſhall have done with this unpleaſing taſk: I have obſerved many to look at pictures, with no other view, than to ſhew their accutcneſs in detecting little errors in drawing, or lapſes of the pencil; theſe do not ſtudy Painting to become knowing, but to appear ſo. But let them reflect, that there is more true taſte, in drawing forth one latent beauty, than in obſerving a hundred obvious imperfections: The firſt proves, that our ſpirit co-operates with that of the artiſt; the ſecond ſhews nothing more, than, that we have eyes, and that we uſe them to very little purpoſe. If theſe errors appear in the ſame light to my reader, that they do to me, he will ſee the neceſſity there was, for ſome better plan than that which

we

we have hitherto followed in the ſtudy of Painting. This is what I propoſe by the Eſſay which I here offer to the publick. I ſhall uſe no art, however cuſtomary it may be on theſe occaſions, to prepare the judgment, or conciliate the good opinion of my readers: One thing only it may be neceſſary to excuſe; I have been forced, in ſome meaſure, to take certain liberties of ſtyle, which, though common in other languages, have not yet been received into ours. Thus I have uſed the MECHANICK, and IDEAL of an art, inſtead of the mechanick, or ideal part of an art; as likewiſe CLEARS and OBSCURES, for clear and obſcure colours. I have borrowed the word NUD from the French; SBOZZO from the Italian; and

and have tranſlated the CHIAROSCURO of the latter into the clear obſcure. Theſe are little licences, unavoidable, in treating of an art, which has not as yet been thoroughly naturalized; and I even wiſh, that they may not be overlooked, in the number of leſs excuſable defects.

CON-

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DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE I.

General Plan of the WORK.

B. WHEN you advanced the other day, in a circle of virtuoſo's, that the ancients were, in painting, as in all the other polite arts, equal, if not ſuperior, to the moderns; your aſſertion was received with an univerſal diſlike. However different my ſentiments were from yours at the time, I was yet perſuaded, that you would not have given into ſo ſingular an opinion, without having good reaſons to ſupport it. I mentioned to you then my doubts, and you was ſo good as to promiſe me you would remove them.

A. I was not at all ſurpriſed at the diſſatisfaction you remarked in thoſe gentlemen; it is unpleaſing to have an opinion brought into doubt, which we have looked upon all our lives as indiſputable. You ſhall now be a judge of the grounds I had for my aſſertion. Had we no other object in view, but merely to determine the different merits of the artiſts, it would hardly be worth the labour; but, by examining the teſtimonies which we ſhall draw from the writings of the ancients, and comparing their ideas with the paintings of the moderns, we ſhall enlarge our conceptions, and improve our knowledge of the art itſelf.

B. THIS proſpect which you have opened upon me, gives me a ſingular pleaſure; for, after having read, with the utmoſt attention, the ſeveral authors on this ſubject, I cannot ſay, that I have received from them the inſtruction I expected.

A. THIS

A. THIS does not proceed from a want of capacity in them, but from a defect in their plans: they are, as you know, biographers; and, as the perſons whoſe lives they write, are all of one profeſſion, the continued repetition of the ſame thoughts, and of the ſame technical terms, tire and diſtract the reader. There is another objection to their manner of writing; their ideas, however juſt, are ſo ſcattered through the different parts of their works, that they are not eaſily reducible to any ſyſtem. In the expoſition of an art, as in the diſtribution of a picture, a looſe diſperſion of the objects, confounds both the eye and the underſtanding. But, theſe writers are ſubject to a ſtill greater diſadvantage; for, as the painters whoſe talents they deſcribe, if we except a very few, excelled much more in the mechanick, than in the ideal part of painting, it throws the force of their obſervations on that point, with which

we, who are but obſervers of the art, have the leaſt to do.

B. THOUGH I underſtand very well the terms mechanick and ideal, in their general acception, yet, I wiſh you would explain them, in their particular relation to the ſubject before us.

A. WE may conſider the imitative arts in two points of view; 1ſt, As imitations of ſuch objects as are actually before the eye; 2dly, As repreſentations of thoſe images which are formed by the fancy. The firſt, is the mechanick or executive part of the art; the ſecond, the ideal or inventive. [*a*] Tully has juſtly diſtinguiſhed thoſe

[*a*] Nec verò ille artifex, quum faceret Jovis formam aut Minervæ, contemplabatur aliquem è quo ſimilitudinem duceret; ſed ipſius in mente inſidebat ſpecies pulchritudinis eximia quædam, quam intuens, in eique defixus, ad illius ſimilitudinem artem et manum dirigebat. In Bruto.

parts,

parts, when he obſerves, that the Jupiter of Phidias was not drawn from any pattern in nature, but from that idea of unexampled beauty, which the artiſt had formed in his mind. The great difference, obſerved among painters of any name, ariſes from their different excellencies in theſe two parts: thoſe, whoſe chief merit is in the mechanick, will, like the Dutch painters, be ſervile copiers of the works of nature; but thoſe, who give wholly into the ideal, without perfecting themſelves in the mechanick, will produce [*b*] ſbozzo's, not pictures: it is evident then, that the perfection of the art conſiſts in an union of theſe two parts. Of all the moderns, Raphael ſeems to have come the neareſt to this point. The next to him is, perhaps, Correggio. I have ſaid *perhaps*, becauſe, though there is no great variety in his

[*b*] The rough draught of a picture.

ideas, yet are they ſometimes ſo happy, attended with ſuch grace, and executed with ſuch truth, that, as there is no one artiſt, whoſe paintings we ſee with more pleaſure, ſo is there no one, whoſe impreſſions we receive more warmly, or remember longer; and this laſt is the teſt of perfect painting. But before I enter further into our ſubject, it may not be improper, to lay before you the method I propoſe to obſerve. Firſt then, we will examine our capacity to judge of the imitative arts; to determine which, we muſt previouſly fix the limits between taſte and ſcience. In the next place, we may conſider the true value of theſe arts, which muſt be eſtimated, by their antiquity, their degree of credit with every polite nation, and, above all, by their uſefulneſs to ſociety. I ſhall then divide painting, which is our principal object, into its four leading branches, namely, deſign, colouring, clear obſcure, and compoſition. Concerning each

of

of theſe, I ſhall endeavour to point out its different beauties and ends; how far the ancients ſeem to have attained thoſe ends; and of courſe, what light they muſt ſtand in, on a compariſon with the moderns. One ſatisfaction you will have in this progreſs, that, almoſt every ſtep we take, will be on claſſick ground; and, as all the teſtimonies I uſe, or lights I borrow, are from the beſt writers of antiquity, the vivacity and good ſenſe in their remarks will at once entertain, and guide us in our purſuit. As the day is now too far ſpent to enter upon our ſubject, to-morrow, if you pleaſe, we will begin; and dedicate a morning to each of the diviſions, in the order I juſt now ſtated them.

DIALOGUE II.

Of our Capacity to judge of PAINTING.

[c] THE learned, says Quintilian, know the principles of an art, the illiterate its effects. He has, in those words, fixed the boundaries between taste and science. Were I to define the former, I should say, [d] that taste was a facility in the mind

[c] Docti rationem artis intelligunt, indocti voluptatem. Lib. ix. 4.

[d] Many writers have opposed judgment to taste, as if they were distinct faculties of the mind; but this must be a mistake: The source of taste is feeling, so is it of judgment, which is nothing more than this same sensibility, improved by the study of its proper objects, and brought to a just point of certainty and correctness. Thus it is clear, that these are but different degrees of the same faculty, and that they are exercised wholly on our own ideas; but, science is the remembrance or assemblage of the ideas of others;

to

to be moved by what is excellent in an art; it is a feeling of the truth. But, ſcience is to be informed of that truth, and of the means by which its effects are produced. It is eaſy to conceive, that, different as theſe principles may be in their ſetting out, they muſt often unite in their deciſions: This agreement will occaſion their being miſtaken one for the other, which is the caſe, when it is affirmed, that no one but an artiſt can form a right judgment of ſculpture or painting. This maxim may hold indeed with reſpect to the mechanick of an art, but not at all as to its effects; the evidence and force of which, are what determine both the value of the art, and merit of the artiſt. What [*e*] Tully obſerves of an excellent

and hence it ſometimes happens, that men the moſt remarkable for this kind of knowledge, are not equally ſo, for their ſenſibility.

[*e*] Id enim ipſum eſt ſummi oratoris, ſummum oratorem populo videri. In Bruto.

orator,

orator, may as justly be said of an excellent painter; his superiority will be evident even to the least intelligent judges. But neither authority nor argument give a weight to our opinions, touching any art we treat of, equal to the illustrations and examples which they lend each other. Happily, [*f*] the near affinity that is observed between the polite arts, they being indeed all but different means of addressing the same passions, makes this, at once, the most effectual and ready method of conveying our ideas. I find in Dionysius Halicarnasseus an observation on musick much to my purpose. [*g*] "I

[*f*] Omnes artes, quæ ad humanitatem pertinent, habent quoddam commune vinculum, et quasi cognatione inter se continentur. Cic. pro Archia poëta.

[*g*] Εοικε και εν τοις σπουδαιοτατοις ποιηταις ὁ ποιητης ὁ συμπλοκος παντοδαπος και αμουσος ειναι, ὡσπερ ανθρωπων, ὡς φυσιν τις εστιν ἑκαστου ἡμων οικειοις ρημασι συμμετρον τε και ευρυθμιαν· Κιθαριζειν τε αγαθον σφοδρα λυδοκιμυκα δε

have

"have learned," says he, "in theatres filled "with a promiscuous and illiterate "crowd, what a kind of natural correspondence we all have with melody, "and the agreement of sounds: Having "known the most admired and able musician to be hissed by the whole multitude, when he has struck a single string "out of tune, to the disturbance of harmony; yet, put this same instrument "into the hands of one of those simpletons, with orders to express that note, "which he would exact from the artist, "he cannot do it. Whence is this? The "one is the effect of science, the lot but "of a few; the other of feeling, which

ὑμεῖς δὲ ὦ κακοδαίμονες, ἐπὶ μιᾶς ῥηχείσης ἀπεμφόνως ἐπέφυσε, καὶ ἐφθειρε τὸ μέλος· καίτοι εἰ τις κιθαρῳδὸς τον ἰδιωτην τουτων τι ὢν ἐπικαλει τοις τεχνιταις ὡς ἡμαρτηκόσιν, αὐτον ποιησαι λαβοῦσα τα ὀργανα, οὐκ αν δυναίτο· τι δη ποτε; ὅτι τεχνης μεν ἐπιστημης ἐστιν, ἣς ὀλιγοι μεταλαμβανουσι· τοῦ δε πασιν, ὁ πασιν ἀπεδωκεν ἡ φυσις. Dion. Halicarn. De struct. orat. sect. xi.

"nature

" nature has beſtowed on all." This applies itſelf to our preſent ſubject: The eye has its principle of correſpondence with what is juſt, beautiful, and elegant: It acquires, like the ear, an [*b*] habitual delicacy; and anſwers, with the ſame fidelity and preciſion, to the fineſt impreſſions: Verſed in the works of the beſt painters, it ſoon learns to diſtinguiſh true expreſſions from falſe, and grace from affectation; quickened by exerciſe, and confirmed by compariſon, it outſtrips reaſoning; and feels in an inſtant that truth, which the other developes by degrees.

B. YOU have been deſcribing, what Tully calls a learned, and we, I think, may term a chaſte eye. But, do you not, in this proceſs, make the growth of taſte

[*b*] Conſuetudo oculorum. Cic. lib. iv. Acad. queſt.

to

to be little more than a ſenſitive vegetation, withdrawing it wholly from its dependency on ſcience?

A. LET us obſerve its advances in poetry, as we have before in muſick: This too, will be the more deciſive, as poetry is an union of the two powers of muſick and picture. In this, the imagination, on its firſt ſetting out, ever prefers extravagance to juſtneſs, or falſe beauties to true; it kindles at the flaſhes of Claudian; and flutters at the points of Statius; this is its childhood. As it grows in vigour, it refines in feeling; till, ſuperior to its firſt attractions, it reſts on the tender pathetick of Virgil; or the manly ſpirit of Lucretius. Exactly parallel to this, is the progreſs of the eye in painting; its firſt affections are always ill placed; it is enamoured with the ſplendid

did impoſitions of Rubens, or the [*i*] theatrical grace of Guido; this laſts not long; it grows chaſte in its purſuit; and ſlighting thoſe falſe beauties, dwells on the native and mellow tints of Titian; on the unforced attitudes, and elegant ſimplicity of Raphael. Was this change, in both caſes, the reſult of reaſoning, or produced by a

[*i*] The grace of Guido is rather technical than ideal; by the firſt is meant a certain flow of Contour, invariably applied to every character, and on every occaſion. Thus the daughter of Herodias receives the head of St. John, with the ſtudied dignity of an actreſs; and the victorious St. Michael, treads on the body of his antagoniſt, with all the preciſion of a dancing maſter. By an ideal grace, I underſtand that particular image, which in the inſtant ſtrikes a polite imagination, as peculiar to the action and character before it —— Of this the Sancta Cecilia of Raphael, and the Magdalen in the St. Jerome of Coreggio, are the happieſt examples: The graceſulneſs in theſe figures is not only proper to their characters, but gives a ſingular force and beauty to the expreſſion. It was from this happineſs, that the venuſtas of Apelles became proverbial; as, among us, any action that is ſingularly graceful, is termed Correggieſque.

growing knowledge of the rules of each art, we ſhould mark its advances; the contrary of which is almoſt ever the caſe; ſo that we are often ſurpriſed at this alteration in ourſelves, and wonder, that the ideas and objects which affected us ſo warmly at firſt, ſhould, in a ſhort courſe of time, act ſo coldly upon us: Nay, ſome men there are, and thoſe too very capable of judging in other matters, who never riſe to this change; but continue, to the laſt, under the influence of the ſame boyiſh and wanton imagination.

B. THE greateſt difficulty in your ſyſtem, would be, to deduce the different degrees, as well as diverſity of our taſtes, from this ſame univerſal principle of feeling.

A. THE firſt, I ſhould think, may be accounted for, from the different proportions of that ſenſibility, as beſtowed on us by

by nature, or improved by ourſelves: The ſecond, from the diverſity in our imaginations, in the direction given to them by education, and the conſtitutional or temporary flow of the animal ſpirits. But, as this is an inquiry quite beyond my reach, I ſhall leave it to thoſe, who can trace the progreſs of our ideas; and can determine, and account for the various influences of outward objects on our ſenſes. Inſtead of loſing our time in ſuch endleſs diſquiſitions, let us found our knowledge on facts; and paſs from them to natural and uſeful concluſions. "The [*k*] Lacedemonians," ſays Atheneus, "are no "where repreſented as being themſelves "muſicians; yet, the purity of their taſte "in this art, is univerſally acknowledged: "they having, at three different times,

[*k*] Λακεδαιμονιοι, οι μεν εμαθαυον την μουσικην, ουδεν λεγουσιν· ὁτι δε κρινειν δυναιλαι καλως την τεχνην, ὁμολογειται. φαρ' αυτων γαρ φασι τρις ηδη σισωκεναι διαφθειρομενην αυτην. Athenæus, lib. xiii. Deipnoſoph. c. 6.

when

" when it was corrupted and loſt, reſtored " and preſerved it." The following obſervation by Tully, at the ſame time that it illuſtrates, receives authority from this fact.—" All [*l*] men, by a kind of tacit " feeling, without art or ſcience, diſtin- " guiſh, in both caſes, what is right from " what is wrong; and, as they evidently do " ſo in painting and ſculpture, ſo, *&c. &c.* And again: " It is wonderful, ſays he, that, " ſeeing the difference is ſo great between " the knowing and the ignorant, in the " practice of an art, that the difference " ſhould be ſo far from great, in their " judgments concerning it."

[*l*] Omnes enim tacito quodam ſenſu, ſine ulla arte aut ratione, quæ ſint in artibus ac rationibus recta ac parva dijudicant; idque cum faciunt in picturis et in ſignis, &c. &c.

Mirabile eſt, cùm plurimùm in faciendo interſit inter doctum et rudem, quàm non multùm differat in judicando. De Oratore, lib. iii.

B. You have, I think, fully eſtabliſhed the principle you contend for; namely, that we have all within us the ſeeds of taſte, and are capable, if we exerciſe our powers, of improving them into a ſufficient knowledge of the polite arts. I am perſuaded, that nothing is a greater hinderance to our advances in any art, than the high opinion we form of the judgment of its profeſſors, and the proportionable diffidence of our own. I have rarely met with an artiſt, who was not an implicit admirer of ſome particular ſchool, or a ſlave to ſome favourite manner. They ſeldom, like gentlemen and ſcholars, riſe to an unprejudiced and liberal contemplation of true beauty. The difficulties they find in the practice of their art, tie them down to the mechanick: at the ſame time, that ſelf-love and vanity lead them into an admiration of

thoſe ſtrokes of the pencil, which come the neareſt to their own. I knew a painter at Rome, a man of ſenſe too, who talked much more of Jacinto Brandi, than he did either of Correggio or Raphael.

DIALOGUE III.

Of the Antiquity and Uſefulneſs of PAINTING.

THOUGH the antiquity of an art is not that which ſhould determine its value, yet, it creates a reſpect, and increaſes, if I may be allowed the expreſſion, its conſequence with us, when we know it to have been the ſtudy and purſuit of the earlieſt ages. The connection that prevails between the polite arts, extends not only to a ſimilitude in their operations and effects, it marks likewiſe a kind of ſiſter-hood in their origin: For, as the different branches of the ſame art are ever obſerved to flouriſh together; ſo, the power of drawing men to our ends by flattering their imaginations, or intereſting their paſſions being

ing exerted in any one mode, we may reaſonably promiſe ourſelves the invention of the reſt. Hence we muſt always expect to ſee painting, eloquence, and ſculpture advancing like the Graces, hand in hand, to perfection: They ſhould, like the glories of the rainbow, ſhine forth at once in a friendly ſplendor; and, to continue the image, they ſhould too, like thoſe, fade and go out in an immediate ſucceſſion: — Accordingly this has been in all times the caſe. "[*m*] For who, ſays an "ancient writer, can ſufficiently wonder, "that the moſt eminent geniuſes in every "profeſſion, ſhould appear in the ſame "degrees of excellence, and at the ſame "critical point of time?" It had been ſo in the ages of Alexander the Great, and

[*n*] Quis enim abunde mirari poteſt, quod eminentiſſima cujuſque profeſſionis ingenia, in eandem formam, et in idem arctati temporis congruant ſpatium? Vell. Pat. Hiſt. lib. i. c. 16.

Auguſtus; and was ſo afterwards, in thoſe of Leo X, and Lewis XIV. If, therefore, that which has been invariable in the hiſtorical ages, may, by a juſt analogy, be extended to thoſe which preceded them, I ſhould have no more difficulty in pronouncing, that there were painters before the time of Homer, than Tully had in affirming, that there were poets. Though the reaſon of things may be ſufficient to eſtabliſh this opinion; yet, we have ſtill ſurer grounds to reſt on: Sculpture and painting muſt, from their nature, be inſeparable, as deſign is the parent of both. That the firſt of theſe exiſted before Homer, we can have no doubt, when we read his deſcription of the ſhield of Achilles; the compoſition of which would do honour to a Fiammingo, or Algardi. He ſays, in one place, that the earth grew dark under the plow. This ſhows, that they then knew

knew the [*n*] art of colouring metals by fire, or by their mixtures; this is an evident imitation of painting: it is, beſide, a refinement; and ſpeaks the art, not in its infancy, but at full growth. If we allow then in this caſe, the ſame ſpace of time, to bring it from its birth to its perfection, which every other art, though of leſs compaſs than this, has taken, we ſhall find it in being at the time of the [*o*] Trojan war. I ſhould not be ſo particular in tracing the origin of ſculpture, and conſequently of painting, to this era, were it not, that

[*n*] This art was loſt in the time of Pliny. Quondam æs confuſum auro argentoque miſcebatur, et tamen ars pretioſior erat: Nunc incertum eſt, pejor hæc fit, an materia; mirumque cum ad infinitum operum pretia creverint, ars extincta eſt. Lib. xxxiv. c. 2.

[*o*] Servius, ad ver. 392, 393. Æneid. ii. has the following note: Scutis Græcorum, Neptunus; Trojanorum, fuit Minerva depicta. And again, ad ver. 784. Æneid. x. Lino tegebantur ſcuta, ut poſſent inhærere picturæ.

Pliny confidently affirms, that the latter did not exiſt in thoſe times; for which, however, he gives no reaſon, any more than he does, for treating as ridiculous the aſſertion of the Egyptians, that they practiſed painting, many thouſand years before it was known in Greece. Whoever conſults [*p*] Tacitus will find, that the Egyptians knew deſign, and ſculptured marble, long before they had the knowledge of letters; which, Cadmus, a deſcendent of theirs, many ages after, introduced into Greece.

B. WHAT you have offered concerning the Egyptians, is confirmed by a later and undoubted example. When the Spaniards firſt arrived in America, the

[*p*] Primi per figuras animalium Ægyptii ſenſus mentis effingebant, et antiquiſſima monumenta memoriæ humanæ impreſſa ſaxis cernuntur. Annal. lib. xi. cap. 14.

news was ſent to the Emperor in painted expreſſes, they not having at that time the uſe of letters.

A. As it is evident that paint bears the immediate ſtamp, and very image of our conceptions, [q] ſo it was natural, that men ſhould ſooner hit on this method of repreſenting their thoughts, than by letters, which have no connection with, or reſemblance to the ideas they ſtand for: From whence, no leſs than from the authority of hiſtory, it has been juſtly concluded, that writing is of a much later invention than painting. But that which brought the antiquity of the latter ſo much

[q] It is to be obſerved, that, in the Greek tongue, the ſame word (γραφειν) ſignifies to paint, or to write; which is eaſily accounted for, if we ſuppoſe that, like the Egyptians, they firſt explained their thoughts by paint: So that, afterwards, when letters were diſcovered, though they changed the manner, they continued the term.

into

into doubt, was the vanity of the Greeks. Piqued that any other nation ſhould have the honour of its invention, they dated its origin from its firſt appearance among themſelves; they tell us of a certain maid, who to have ſome preſent image of her lover, who was about to leave her, [r] drew the out-lines of his ſhadow on a wall.

B. IT was prettily imagined however, to make the moſt amiable of all our paſſions give birth to the moſt pleaſing of all arts.

A. Pliny who mentions this, objects to the Greeks their inconſiſtency, and want of accuracy. The firſt painter they name, lived in the nintieth olympiad; upon which

[r] Hence the art itſelf was by the Greeks termed Σκιαγραφια· and in the Latin, *Adumbrare* and *Pingere* are ſynonymous.

he

he obſerves, that Candaules, "a king "of Lydia, who died in the eighteenth, "gave an immenſe price for a picture "by Bularchus; to which he adds, [*s*] "it is manifeſt, that the art was even "then in its full beauty and perfection; "which, if we are forced to allow, it "neceſſarily follows, that its beginnings "muſt have been much more ancient."

THE Picturæ Ardeæ, ſo much praiſed by Pliny, were, as he tells us, painted before the foundation of Rome; as were the Atalanta and Helena at Lanuvium, by the ſame hand; each of excellent beauty. This is a ſecond proof, that painting was at a high point of perfection before the inſtitution of the olympiads. Having thus eſtabliſhed the reputation of

[*s*] Manifeſtâ jam tum claritate artis atque abſolutione; quod ſi recipi neceſſe eſt, ſimul apparet multò vetuſtiora principia eſſe. Lib. xxxv.

our

our art, ſo far as depends on its antiquity; I ſhall come to conſider it in a light much more to its advantage, I mean its uſefulneſs to ſociety. I ſhall enlarge the more on this, as we do not ſeem to be ſufficiently acquainted with it in this character.

WHEN Plato baniſhed poetry from his republick, it is to be wondered he did not extend his ſeverity to painting and ſculpture: It is probable, he did not ſo well know the powers of theſe arts, or how far their merit entitled them to his perſecution. It ſhould ſeem that legiſlators, for the moſt part, divide men into two extremes; to thoſe of the finer temper, they propoſe the good of ſociety, and beauty of virtue, as ſufficient motives to action: But the vulgar and ſordid natures are, by their leading paſſions, as pride, fear

fear and hope, to be compelled into virtue. Such ſyſtems as theſe may produce a Spartan ſeverity, or Roman patriotiſm, but never an Athenian politeneſs. To effect this, the ſofter paſſions, and even elegant habitudes are to be employed: Theſe only can humanize the mind, and temper it into a ſenſibility of the ſlighteſt impreſſions, and moſt exquiſite feelings. Hence ſpring attention, [*t*] civility, the fine diſguiſes of our own paſſions, and inſinuating addreſs to thoſe of others; theſe faſhion themſelves into a ſyſtem of politeneſs; ſociety becomes amiable, as well as good, and we have at laſt, the beſt incitements to

[*t*] In the ancient mythology, the Χαρίτες or Graces were made to preſide over courteſy, and outward charms: The aſſigning them this double province, was happily imagined; for civility, or the deſire to pleaſe, naturally produces a gracefulneſs of action; and ſpreads over our perſons that venuſtas, which is the completion of exterior beauty.

the

the practice of virtue, in the [u] agreeableneſs of its objects.

B. THUS, the firſt motives may be ſaid to act like the preſſure of the heart or current of the blood; their operations are evident: But the latter, of a more refined nature, like the animal ſpirits, though they work unperceived, give life and movement to well ordered ſocieties.

A. OVID takes notice of the utility, as well as the pleaſure we receive from an encouragement of the polite arts [x].

Each pleaſing art lends ſoftneſs to the mind,
And, with our ſtudies, are our lives refin'd.

[u] This was well underſtood by Confucius, the Chineſe legiſlator; who ranks civility with gratitude, in the claſs of cardinal virtues.

[x] Scilicet ingenium placida mollitur ab arte,
Et ſtudio mores convenienter eunt.
Lib. iii. de Arte.

And

And Petronius views their effects in a moral light, obſerving, [y] that violent paſſions dwell in the rude, but take no hold of a cultivated mind.—Were we then to conſider the arts merely as objects of elegant ſpeculation, or as the means of poliſhing and ſoftening our manners, we could not prize them too highly; but their effects are much more extenſive. The powers of eloquence and muſick are univerſally acknowledged; ſo would be thoſe of paint were they as univerſally exerciſed. The Athenians paſſed a law, that none who were not of a liberal birth, ſhould practiſe in this art: They could not better ſhow the ſenſe they had of its power than in the care they took of its direction. They knew the dominion it had over our paſſions, and hence were careful to lodge it in the ſafeſt hands. Agreeable to this idea, the Greek

[y] Similiter in pectoribus ira conſidit, feras quidem mentes obſidet, eruditas prælabitur. In Satyrico.

writers

writers often ſpeak of the drama of a painter, of the moral of painting; expreſſions which mark, that they conſidered this art, as on a level, and co-operating with poetry. One of the graveſt and moſt judicious of the Romans viewed it in the ſame light. [z] Picture, ſays Quintilian, a ſilent and uniform addreſs, yet penetrates ſo deeply into our inmoſt affections, that it ſeems often to exceed even the powers of eloquence. We cannot doubt the ſincerity of this deciſion, if we conſider the character of the perſon from whom it comes. Cicero was equally ſenſible of the powers of the pencil, and often ſets them in competition with thoſe of his favourite art. Their effects are ſometimes wonderful. It is ſaid, that Alexander trembled and grew pale, on ſeeing a picture of Palamedes be-

[z] Pictura, tacens opus et habitus ſemper ejuſdem, ſic in intimos penetrate affectus, ut ipſam vim dicendi nonnunquam ſuperare videatur.

trayed

trayed to death by his friends; it bringing to his mind a ſtinging remembrance of his treatment of Ariſtonicus. Portia could bear with an unſhaken conſtancy her laſt ſeparation from Brutus; but when ſhe ſaw, ſome hours after, a picture of the parting of Hector and Andromache, ſhe burſt into a flood of tears: Full as ſeemed her ſorrow, the painter ſuggeſted new ideas of grief, or impreſs'd more ſtrongly her own. I have ſomewhere met with a pretty ſtory of an Athenian courtezan, who, in the midſt of a riotous banquet with her lovers, accidentally caſt her eye on the portrait of a philoſopher, that hung oppoſite to her ſeat; the happy character of temperance and virtue, ſtruck her with ſo lively an image of her own unworthineſs, that ſhe inſtantly quitted her room; and retiring home, became ever after an example of temperance, as ſhe had been before of debauchery. You might tax me with doing injuſtice to

the preſent times, were I to draw all my proofs from the ancient; I appeal, therefore, to yourſelf, who have had an opportunity to prove it, whether you could look on the death of Germanicus, as painted by Pouſin, without feeling a generous indignation at the cruelty of his oppreſſor, and an equal compaſſion for unhappy virtue. The repreſentation of a plague, by the ſame author, melts the ſoul into a tender participation of human miſeries: Theſe impreſſions end not here; they give a turn to the mind advantageous to ſociety; every argument of ſorrow, every object of diſtreſs, renews the ſame ſoft vibrations, and quickens us to acts of humanity and benevolence.

B. By what fatality has it been, that a nation, eminent for its productions in poetry and eloquence, capable of the greateſt efforts of genius, and bleſt with the

happieſt ſenſibility, ſhould, for ſo many ages, with a kind of wilful and Gothic rudeneſs, have withſtood the allurements of this divine art?

A. THE extraordinary paſſion which the Engliſh have for portraits, muſt ever prevent the riſe of hiſtory painting among us: The liberal, like the mechanick arts, depend wholly on the encouragement they meet with.

B. IT ſhould ſeem, that we inherit our taſte in painting from our Britiſh anceſtors; Propertius has given a picture of them, which, with the ſmalleſt allowance, might paſs for our own. [*a*]

Like the daub'd Briton now you ſtrike the eye,
And look more trifling in a borrow'd die.

[*a*] Nunc etiam infectos demens imitare Britannos,
Ludis et externo tincta nitore caput.
Lib. ii. Eleg. 18.

It is, you ſee, the ſame ſpirit, a little varied in its operations.

A. YOUR countrymen will not thank you for having revived this branch of their inheritance. But, to reſume our ſubject; it is certain, that the love of this art has been conſidered in every civilized nation, not only as a proof of their politeneſs, but even as the teſt of their humanity. Virgil, who ſeldom hazards his reflections, has given us a ſingular inſtance of his judgment on this point. Æneas, on his landing in Africk, has many fears touching the temper and manners of the Africans; but he no ſooner ſees the walls of their temple covered with paintings, than, ſecure of a reception, he cries out in a tranſport to his friend [*b*]:

[*b*] Sunt lacrymæ rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt. Solve metum. Æneid. i.

Here

Here others ills are felt, the wretched here
Are ſure to meet the tribute of a tear.
Vain were our fears.

B. WHAT then muſt Æneas have thought, had he heard, that in that country, painting was taxed by the foot, or ſeen his helpleſs Penates hurried away to the cuſtom-houſe?

A. YOU may expect, that, before I quit the effects of paint, I ſhould ſay ſomething of the pleaſure we receive from it: But, as this is itſelf a paſſion, founded on the love of what is beautiful, and the delight we feel in having our paſſions moved, it is eaſier to affirm its exiſtence, than to explain its nature.—It is enough therefore to obſerve, that this pleaſure has prevailed in every age, and takes in all characters of men, from the

elegant obſerver of beauty, down to the illiterate ruſtic, who, as Horace humourouſly expreſſes it, ſtares, *contento poplite*, at the daubings of the art, and is tranſported with the magick of a charcoal pencil.

DIA-

DIALOGUE IV.

Of DESIGN.

A. WE are told by Pliny, that all the ſtatues before the time of Dædalus, were repreſented ſtiff and motionleſs; with winking eyes, cloſed feet, and arms hanging in right lines to their ſides [*c*]: Theſe were the rude eſſays of deſign,

[*c*] Conniventibus oculis, pedibus junctis, brachiis in latera demiſſis, ſtatu rigido. —The Egyptians continued to the laſt, even when they were maſters of a perfect deſign, to repreſent their deities in the manner above deſcribed: We cannot ſuppoſe that this was owing to an ignorance of the advantages of a graceful action, but rather to their bigotted attachment to certain theological ideas. The motion they aſcribed to their divinities, was neither that of walking nor flying; Milton, who has adopted their idea, deſcribes it preciſely in the following lines, ——

So ſaying, by the hand he took me, rais'd,
And over fields and waters, as in air
SMOOTH SLIDING WITHOUT STEP, *laſt led me up*
A woody mountain. ——

Dædalus, and his immediate followers, unfolded theſe embaraſſed figures; they threw motion into the limbs, and life into the countenance. In the progreſs of the art, and in abler hands, motion was faſhioned into grace, and life was heightened into character. Now, too, it was, that beauty of form was no longer confined to mere imitation, which always falls ſhort of the object imitated; to make the copy equal in its effect, it was neceſſary to give it ſome advantage over its model. The artiſt, therefore, obſerving, that nature was ſparing of her perfections, and that her efforts were limited to parts, availed himſelf of

The Greeks who borrowed their religion, as they did their arts, from the Egyptians, followed for ſome time this mode of repreſentation; till at length, (which was, perhaps, the æra Pliny mentions) their averſion to every thing that was ungraceful, overcame their prejudices; and this might have been a principal reaſon, that in the end they ſo far excelled their maſters,——

her

her inequality, [*d*] and drawing theſe ſcattered beauties into a more happy and compleat union, roſe from an imperfect imitative, to a perfect ideal beauty. We are informed, that the painters of Greece preſſed in crowds to deſign the boſom and breaſts of Thais: Nor were the elegant proportions of Phryne leſs the object of their ſtudy. By this conſtant contemplation of the beautiful, they enriched their imagination and confirmed their taſte; from this fund they drew their ſyſtems of beauty; and though we ſhould conſider them but as imitators as to the parts, we muſt allow them to have been inventors in the

[*d*] Ὁποίᾳ τρόπῳ, καὶ τοῖς τὰ ἀγαλμάτα τεύσι διαπλαττουσιν, ὅι ἄν τὸ καθ' ἕκαστον καλὸν συναγαγοῦσις. καὶ καθάπερ τὴν τιχὴν ἐκ διαφόρων σωμάτων ἀθροισασῆς εἰς μίμησιν μιᾶς, καλλίστης ἐν ὑγιὲς καὶ ἀρίστου καὶ ἡρμοσμένου αὐτῷ αὐτῷ ἐξεργασασῆς· Καὶ ἐκ ἄν εὕροις σῶμα ἀκριβὲς καθ' ὁλοκλήρου ἀγάλματι ὅμοιον· Ὀφθαλμὸς γὰρ ἀὶ τιχαὶ τοῦ καλλίστου.

Max. Tyr. Diſſert. xxiii. ed. Lond.

compoſitions:

compoſitions. And indeed, when we reflect on the taſte and judgment requiſite to form theſe various ideas into ſuch a wonderful agreement, we cannot ſet too high a value on their productions. The poets and writers of antiquity acknowledge this ſuperiority of invented to real beauty.—

OVID thus deſcribes Cyllarus the Centaur, [*e*] ——

A juſt proportion, and a manly grace,
Spread thro' his limbs, and kindled in his face,
Nature for once aſſum'd the ſculptor's part,
And in a faultleſs beauty rival'd art.——

And Philoſtratus, ſpeaking of the beauty of Neoptolemus, remarks, that it was as much inferior to that of his father Achilles, as the handſomeſt men are to the fineſt ſtatues.

[*e*] Gratus in ore vigor: cervix, humerique, manuſque,
Pectoraque artificum laudatis proxima ſignis,
Ex qua parte vir eſt. Metam. lib. xii.

Should

Should we ſtill doubt of the truth or juſtneſs of the deſcriptions, let us obſerve the works which gave occaſion to them. Let us contemplate the fine proportions, the ſtyle of drawing in the Laocoon and Gladiator. Let us mark the ſublime of the art, in the expreſſive energy, the divine character of the Apollo. Let us dwell on the elegant beauties of the Venus of Medicis. Theſe are the utmoſt efforts of deſign: It can reach no farther than a full exertion of grace, character, and beauty. We have thus traced the genius of deſign from its firſt eſſays to its full flight. But there is an [*f*] enthuſiaſm in every art. The Greek ſtatuaries felt themſelves ſtraitened within the out-lines of nature; they invented new proportions, they concieved

[*f*] Ἐνθουσιασαν τῃ τεχνῃ——ὥστε καὶ Φειδίαν ἐνθουσιαστὴν δημιουργὸν. Suidas.

new

new characters. The [g] Jupiter and Minerva of Phidias were ſubjects of aſtoniſhment in the moſt enlightened ages. It ſhould ſeem, that the wonderful effect of theſe ſtatues, proceeded from an union of the beautiful, with the great and uncommon; thus combining the whole influence of viſible objects on the imagination. If we are aſtoniſhed at the firſt ſight of the Coloſſal ſtatues on the monte Cavallo at Rome, a ſecret and growing pleaſure ſucceeds this amazement: For, though the immenſity of their form ſeems, at firſt, to ſet them above the ſcale of our ideas, yet, ſo happy is the ſymmetry of their parts, ſuch a freedom of deſign, ſuch an aptneſs for action prevail throughout, that the eye ſoon becomes familiar with their proportions, and capable of their beauties.

[g] Non vidit Phidias Jovem, fecit tamen, velut tonantem; nec ſtetit ante oculos ejus Minerva, dignus tamen illa arte animus, et concepit Deos et exhibuit. Senec. Ret. lib. x.

B. IT is probable, that a great part of the pleaſure which we receive in the contemplation of ſuch Coloſſal figures, ariſes from a compariſon of their proportions with our own. The mind, in theſe moments, grows ambitious; and feels itſelf aſpiring to greater powers, and ſuperior functions: Theſe noble and exalted feelings diffuſe a kind of rapture through the ſoul; and raiſe in it conceptions and aims above the limits of humanity. The fineſt, and, at the ſame time, moſt pleaſing ſenſations in nature, are thoſe, which, (if I may be allowed the expreſſion) carry us out of ourſelves, and bring us neareſt to that divine original from which we ſpring.

A. To this power of humanizing, if I may ſo call it, theſe Coloſſal proportions, ſucceeds that of annexing the ſublime to the moſt minute. When two ſuch extremes correſpond

correſpond in their effects, we may be aſſured, that the merit in both ſprings from the ſame cauſe, a [*b*] greatneſs of manner. The moſt celebrated inſtance in this kind, was the Hercules of Lyſippus; which, though not more than a foot in height, filled the imagination equal to the Hercules Farneſe. ——As this ſtatue is loſt, we muſt content ourſelves with the deſcription of it by Statius [*i*].

At the chaſte beard the god himſelf appears,
Inſpires the artiſt, and the banquet chears;
He, only he, could teach thee to confine
A great idea to minute deſign;

[*b*] Μεγαλοτεχνον.

[*i*] Hæc inter cultæ genius tutelaque menſæ
Amphitryoniades, &c.
——— Deus ille, Deus: Seſeque videndum
Indulſit, Lyſippe, tibi, parvique videri
Sentirique ingens; et cum mirabilis intra
Stet menſura pedem, tamen exclamare libebit,
(Si vilus per membra feras) hos poſtera poſſint
Vaſtator Nemees,——&c.

Lib. iv. Sylv.

From

From part to part our heated fancy flies,
And gives to character, what ſpace denies;
Preſs'd by that arm, the lion pants for breath;
And Cacus trembles at th' impending death.

B. THE Jupiter of Phidias, and Hercules of Lyſippus are equal examples of the ſuperior genius of the Greeks; and it muſt be confeſſed, that if they have improved on nature, it was not ſo much by quitting her proportions, as excelling her ideas. When I reflect on this evident ſuperiority of the Greek artiſts over the ancient and Modern Roman, I am at a loſs to account for it: I cannot attribute it wholly to a pre-eminence of genius; being unwilling to believe, that nature could confine true taſte to ſuch narrow boundaries: And yet, if ſhe is partial to particular ages, why may not ſhe be ſo to particular climates?

A. THIS

A. THIS reflection is humbling; let us look for a ſecond cauſe. [*k*] Seneca obſerves, "That naked bodies, as they betray their imperfections, ſo they give a "full exhibition of their beauties:" Each of theſe effects tends to the improvement of deſign, Cloathing on the contrary, diſguiſes beauty, and gives a protection to faults. The [*l*] Greeks, it is known, almoſt ever repreſented their figures naked. But the Romans, whoſe character was military, dreſſed theirs in armour. That art which challenges criticiſm, muſt always be ſuperior to that which ſhuns it. We are told by Pliny, [*m*] "That Praxiteles had

[*k*] Nuda corpora, vitia ſi qua ſint, non celant, nec laudes parum oſtentant. Lib. iii. Ep. 6.

[*l*] Græca res eſt nihil velare; at contra, Romana ac militaris, thoracas addere. Plin. lib. xxxiv. c. 5.

[*m*] Duas fecerat Veneres Praxiteles, ſimulque vendebat; alteram velata ſpecie, quam ob id quidem

made

"made two ſtatues of Venus, which he "ſold at the ſame time; the one clothed; "which, for that reaſon, was preferred by "the people of Cos: Thoſe of Gnidus "purchaſed that which was rejected. The "reputation of theſe ſtatues was widely "different; for by this laſt Praxiteles en-"nobled Gnidus." We may conceive then that the Greeks had the ſame advantage over the Romans, that the naked Venus had over the clothed: This advantage holds ſtill more ſtrongly againſt the moderns; who, borrowing their characters and ſubjects from a chaſte religion, are not only forced in decency to clothe their figures; but often, by propriety, to make that clothing of the coarſeſt materials. Hence it is, that we often ſee a Saint bending under a load of drapery, and the elegant form of a

praetulerunt Coi; rejectam Gnidii emerunt: Immensâ differentiâ famæ; illo enim signo Praxiteles nobilitavit Gnidum. Lib. xxxvi. c. 5.

Desunt duæ paginæ.

obſerve the attitudes and movements of the Greek ſtatues, we ſhall mark that careleſs decency, and unaffected grace, which ever attend the motions and geſtures of men unconſcious of obſervation. There [*n*] is a prodigious difference, between thoſe movements which flow from nature, and thoſe which are directed by art.

THE ancients knew this well; and hence followed that ſingular ſimplicity which characteriſes their works: For, though at times, as in the Venus of Medicis, and daughters of Niobe, they riſe to an aſſumed gracefulneſs; and even profeſs a deſire to pleaſe; yet this is confin'd to ſo ſimple a contour; it is ſo little above the meaſure of ordinary action, that it appears leſs the effect of ſtudy, than the natural reſult of

[*n*] Paulùm intereſſe cenſes, ex animo omnia,
Ut fert natura, facias, an de induſtria?
Terent. And. act. iv. ſcene 5.

a ſuperior

a ſuperior character, or an habitual politeneſs.

B. RAPHAEL has, in this particular, been wonderfully happy in his imitation of the antique. The moſt courtly imagination cannot repreſent to itſelf an image of a more winning grace, than is to be ſeen in his Sancta Cæcilia: Indeed, an elegant ſimplicity is the characteriſtic of his deſign; we no where meet in him the affected contraſts of Mic. Angelo, or the ſtudied attitudes of Guido; the true difference between thoſe, may be beſt conceived, in a ſuppoſed compariſon of the real characters of the Drama, with the actors who perſonate them; in Raphael, and the antique, we ſee Alexander and Hamlet, in Mic. Angelo and Guido——And, ——

A. THOUGH in treating of grace and beauty, character, ſo far as it is determin-

et duæ altera,!!

without motion. Thus, Milton diſtinguiſhes it from beauty.

Grace was in all her ſteps, heav'n in her eye.

Venus was but gueſſed at by her beauty; ſhe was known by her motions ——— *Vera inceſſu patuit Dea.*——But, the perfection of Grace is, when it becomes [*o*] characteriſtick; and marks ſome amiable emotion in the mind. Such, we may preſume, was the excellence of Apelles [*p*];

[*o*] Let us unite to theſe amiable expreſſions, a becoming air of the head, flexure of the body, and an elegant diſpoſition of the limbs, we ſhall then have a clear conception of that correggieſque Grace, which it has ſo much puzzled our writers to explain. I have in my poſſeſſion an excellent copy of the St. Jerome of Correggio, where one may ſee in the Angel, the Madonna, the Chriſt, and the Magdalen, ſo many diſtinct examples of this idea.

[*p*] Præcipua Apellis in arte venuſtas fuit, cum eadem ætate maximi pictores eſſent; quorum opera cum admiraretur, collaudatis omnibus, deeſſe iis unam

who,

"who, living at the ſame time with ſome "of the greateſt painters; after he had "ſeen and admired their ſeveral works, "declared, that the only thing wanting in "them was Grace; that they poſſeſſed "every other excellence; but in this, he "ſaw no one equal to himſelf."

B. THE teſtimonies which you produce from their writings; but above all, the Greek ſtatues, which we may look upon as living witneſſes, ſufficiently prove the merit of the ancients. Let us now, if you pleaſe, conſider that of the moderns: Thus, eſtabliſhing a general idea of compariſon between the two, we ſhall have a more perfect one of both. I do not mean to lead you into a detail of the perfections or imperfections of our different artiſts; it will

illam Venerem dicebat, quam [Græci Χαρίτα vocant; cætera omnia contigiſſe, ſed hac ſoli ſibi neminem parem. Plin. lib. xxxv. c. 10.

be

iterum duo !!!

A. IT is true, but yet, not having formed his manner on the moſt beautiful antique, we do not ſee in him that elegance in the proportions, that freedom in the joints, which lend all their motion to the Laocoon and Gladiator. Inſtead of theſe, the figures of Michael Angelo were his models in the great ſtyle; whence, in his convex Contour, having quitted the lines of nature, and not having ſubſtituted thoſe of ideal beauty, he became too like his original; as may be ſeen in his Incendio di Borgo. Would you therefore place Raphael in his true point of view, you muſt obſerve him in the middle age; in old men; or, in the nervous nature: In his Madonna's, he knew very well how to chooſe, as likewiſe how to vary the moſt beautiful parts in nature: But, he knew not, like the Greek ſtatuaries, how to expreſs a beauty ſuperior to the natural. Thus,

in

in his Galatea, at the palace Chigi, where he has [q] profeſſedly attempted a character of perfect beauty, he has fallen ſhort of the beauty of his Madonna's: The cauſe of which ſeems to me to be this, that, in the former, he drew after his own ideas, which were imperfect; in the latter, he copied beautiful nature, which was almoſt perfect. I am confirmed in this opinion by a ſecond obſervation: Of all the objects of paint, Angels call moſt for ideal beauty; thoſe of Raphael, are by no means diſtinguiſhed in this particular; for, he had no examples for them in nature, but was

[q] In a letter to the count Baldaſſar Caſtiglione, he ſpeaks of his Galatea in the following words: "Della "Galatea, mi terrei un gran maeſtro, ſe vi foſſero la "metà delle tante coſe, che V. S. mi ſcrive: E le "dico, che per dipingere una bella, mi biſognaria "veder piu belle: Ma eſſendo careſtia di belle donne, "io mi ſervo di certa idea, che mi viene alla mente. "Se queſta hà in ſe alcuna eccellenza d'arte, io non "ſo: Ben mi affatico di averla."

Uterum, uterumque deus...!!!

Oh! Horrible!!

they produce in the countenance. This idea will always have a great effect on the intelligent obſerver; and, in proportion as the execution is more difficult, it will do more honour to the artiſt. I muſt add to theſe remarks, that, excluſive of the force which beauty gives to expreſſions in general, there are ſome, which cannot well exiſt without it: Thus, if dignity, courage, love, or joy be thrown into a charged or ill-favoured countenance, they grow into an extremity, by which they loſe their very eſſence; and are transformed into pride, fierceneſs, luſt and grimace. You are not to ſuppoſe, that in the caſes above-mentiontioned, I always ſpeak of either abſolute beauty, or abſolute deformity; there are degrees in both; and the judgment of the artiſt conſiſts, in proportioning thoſe degrees to the ſeveral occaſions.

B. This,

B. THIS is, to turn a pleaſing art into an uſeful ſcience; and to make every picture a ſchool of virtue. But yet, I cannnot forgive you, the having reduced the deſign of Raphael, ſo much below the ſtandard, at which it is generally placed.

A. THE judicious Pouſſin has gone much farther than I have done, or even than he had a right to go; when he affirmed, that Raphael among the moderns was an angel, but, that compared with the ancients, he was an aſs. This is too much; however, it ſerves to ſhow how ſenſibly this painter felt the difference that was between them. But, ſetting aſide theſe compariſons our purpoſe is to come at a ſettled idea of the moſt perfect deſign: What is it to us, whether the examples were produced two thouſand, or two hundred years ago? A man of taſte, like the philoſopher, ſhould

be a citizen of the world, acknowledge merit wherever he meets it, indifferent whether it ſhines forth in a Raphael or Apelles, in a Michael Angelo or Glycon.

B. You have advanced, that the greateſt excellence of deſign was grace; whence is it then, that Correggio, who, in this is inimitable, is, by many, placed ſo low in the claſs of Deſigners?

A. THIS ariſes from a want of attention to the character and purſuits of this amiable painter. His conſtant aim was grace: And a happy effect of clear obſcure: A waving and varied Contour was neceſſary to this end; Hence, he gave wholly into the ſerpentine, ſtudiouſly avoiding right lines, and acute angles, as too ſimple in their effects. [*r*] Thus the habit, and even ne-

[*r*] Nullum ſine venia placuit ingenium: Da mihi quemcumque vis magni nominis virum, dicam illi quid

ceſſity of continually varying his out line, threw him into little errors in drawing, which ſpring not, as ſome think, from an ignorance of this branch of his art, but from a predilection for another; and, there are few, I believe, who would wiſh thoſe inadvertencies away, accompanied with the charms which gave occaſion to them.

B. IT is a diſpute among the critics, whether he ever ſaw or imitated the antique.

A. THIS diſpute is his greateſt praiſe; for, they who ſuppoſe he did, cannot otherwiſe account for the general beauty,

ætas ſua ignoverit, quid in illo ſciens diſſimulaverit: Multos dabo, quibus vitia non nocuerint; quoſdam, quibus profuerint; quos, ſi quis corrigit, delet: Sic enim vitia virtutibus immiſta ſunt, ut illas ſecum tractura ſint. Sen. Ep. cxiv.

and elegance of his deſign: While thoſe who are of a contrary opinion, grounded on imperfect relations of his life, or the lapſes and unſteadineſs of his pencil, are forced to impute that beauty and elegance to a pure ſtrength of genius. Certainly, his manner ſeems to have in it all the warmth of invention, as it has a certain boldneſs, ſuperior to imitation, and productive of uncommon graces. Upon the whole, I think, we may affirm of his deſign, where it is not ſacrificed to his more favourite aims, that it is often maſterly, and always pleaſing; a quality, rarely met with in thoſe ſervile and unideal painters, who think they have attained every perfection, if they keep within the rules of drawing; "[s] with theſe, leanneſs paſſes for

[s] Macies illis pro ſanitate, et judicii loco infirmitas eſt; et dum ſatis putant vitio carere, in "health,

"health, and weakneſs for judgment; "and, while they think it ſufficient "to be free from faults, they fall in- "to that capital fault, the want of "beauties."

id ipſum incidunt vitium, quod virtutibus carent. Quint. xi. 4.

DIALOGUE V.

Of COLOURING.

A. SHOULD the moſt able maſter in deſign, attempt to repreſent, by that alone, a roſe or grape, we ſhould have but a faint and imperfect image; let him add to each its proper colours, we no longer doubt; we ſmell the roſe, we touch the grape; hence the poet [*t*]:

So glow'd the grape, ſo perfect the deceit,
My hand reach'd forward, ere I found the cheat.

It ſeems then, that the firſt gives a general idea; the ſecond a particular exiſtence. It was this, no doubt, that induced Plutarch

[*t*] Μικρὸν καὶεσχον τὸν βότρυν τοις δακτύλοις,
Ὑπερεπαλήθεις τῇ δια τῶν χρωμάτων.

to

to affirm, "[*u*] that in painting, we are "more ſtruck by colouring than drawing, "by reaſon of its ſimilitude and decep- "tion:" And another obſerves, "[*x*] That "the painter may deſign the outlines and "proportions of a man, but it is by co- "louring, that he brings it to repreſent a "Socrates or Plato." The ancients were not contented with attributing to colours the power of realizing objects; they make them to be their chief ornament, the very ſoul of beauty: [*y*] Thus Tully, "There "is in the body a certain harmony of pro- "portions, united to the charm of colour- "ing, and this is called beauty. An au-

[*u*] Εν γραφαις κινηλικωτερον εστι χρωμα γραμμης, δια το ανδρεικελον και απαθηλον. De Poetis aud.

[*x*] Ο ζωγραφος ποιει πρωτον ποιον ανθρωπον εν σκιαγραφια, ειτα χρωματιζεγων αγει εις το ποιησαι Σωκρατην, η Πλατωνα. Ammonius in x. Categ. Ariſtot.

[*y*] Corporis eſt quædam apta figura membrorum, cum coloris quadam ſuavitate, eaque dicitur pulchritudo.

" thor, of no leſs authority, obſerves; [z] " that ſuch a body may be deemed truly " beautiful, in which a temperate and " pure blood fills the limbs, and ſwells " the muſcles, ſpreading through the whole " a ruddy tinge and glow of beauty." Hence it was, that a Grecian lady of admired taſte, being aſked, which was the fineſt colour in nature, anſwered, the bluſh of an ingenuous and beautiful youth.

B. You need not draw all your examples from antiquity: Whatever rank our painters may hold, we have Titians in our poets. —Obſerve how Shakeſpear pencils:

'Tis beauty truly blent, whoſe red and white
Natures own ſweet and cunning hand laid on.

[z] In quo temperatus ac bonus ſanguis implet membra, et exſurgit toris; ipſos quoque nervos rubore tegit, ac decore commendat. De cauſ. corrupt. eloq. c. 21.

And

And Fletcher, who excels in the deſcription of beauty and its effects;

Have I not receiv'd
A lady to my bed, that in her eye
Keeps mounting fire, and on her tender cheeks
Inevitable colour? Maid's Tragedy.

Thus too our divine Milton:

To whom the angel, with a ſmile that glow'd
Celeſtial roſy red, Love's proper hue.

Such as theſe may be truly called colours dipped in heaven; and, a fine complexion, in the language of a poet, is the die of Love: Certainly it gives a wonderful effect to beauty; it is a hint of ſomething more than human; it comes forth as the emanation of an intrinſic purity and lovelineſs, and diffuſes through the human form a tinge of the angelic nature.

A. You

A. You paint it like one who had felt its power. The influence, indeed, of this ſpecies of beauty, which is the reſult of colours, ſeems to be univerſal; and to extend to all beings capable of love. But (if we may credit the nice obſervers of nature) it is in none more remarkable than in birds [*a*];

Thro' the bright flocks the cautious wooer flies,
Dweels on each ſpot, and notes their various dies:
Foe to a ſtranger love, he yields alone
To kindred tints, and beauties like his own.

B. I ſhall wiſh hence forward to underſtand the language of a goldfinch; what a pleaſure would it be, to hear the male warbling forth,

[*a*] —— Agmina late
Fæminea explorat cautus, maculaſque requirit
Cognatas, paribuſque interlita corpora guttis.
Spect. N°. 412.

Urit

Urit me Glyceræ nitor,
Et vultus nimium lubricus aſpici.

A. THE open was palpable, and your raillery is perfectly fair. But, to return to our ſubject; whatever may be the influence of colours on other beings, we can have no doubt of it in ourſelves; inſomuch, that irregular, and even ordinary features, ſhall often, by the mere luſtre of red and white, overbear the power of the moſt perfect ſymmetry.

WE are not to wonder therefore, that the poets, hurrying over the other circumſtances of beauty, dwell with ſo much pleaſure upon this. Thus the elegant Tibullus [*b*],

[*b*] Candor erat, qualem præfert Latonia Luna,
Et color in niveo corpore purpureus.
Ut juveni primum virgo deducta marito,
Inficitur teneras ore rubente genas;

Such

Such a mix'd whiteneſs ſpreads the doubtful moon
So thro' his ſnowy ſkin the ſcarlet ſhone;
Thus, ting'd in bluſhes, moves the conſcious maid
With ſtep ſuſpended to the nuptial bed:
Thus intermix'd with lilies breathes the roſe,
And ripening apple with vermilion glows.

Statius on a ſimilar occaſion is more warm, and kindles almoſt to extravagance [*c*];

Stripp'd of his garments, with a ſudden bound
He ſtarts to view, and deals a brightneſs round;
His poliſh'd limbs, and glowing breaſt diſplay
Beauties, that gladden like the ſpring of day;
Thro' his whole frame diffus'd, our eyes may trace
The kindred bluſh and ſplendor of his face.

Et cum contexunt amaranthis alba puellæ
Lilia, et autumno candida mala rubent.
Lib. iii. Eleg. 4.

[*c*] Emicat, et torto chlamydem diffibulat auro.
Effulſere artus, membrorumque omnis aperta eſt
Lætitia, inſigneſque humeri, nec pectora nudis
Deteriora genis, latuitque in corpore vultus.
Theb. lib. vi.

If

If the poets conſidered colouring as the chief beauty in nature; it is no wonder, that painters, whoſe art is an imitation of nature, ſhould make it the great object of their ſtudy. Accordingly, Parrhaſius, Zeuxis, and Apelles, the moſt celebrated painters, were at the ſame time, the moſt excellent colouriſts. If we examine the praiſes beſtowed on the laſt of them, we ſhall find, that they turn chiefly on that truth and beauty, which are the gift of colours: The maſter-piece of this painter, and conſequently of the art itſelf, was his Venus anadyomene. Tully thus marks its perfections, [*d*] "In the Coan Venus, that is "not real body, but the reſemblance of a "body: Nor is that ruddineſs, ſo diffuſed "and blended with white, real blood, but

[*d*] In Venere Coa, corpus illud non eſt, ſed ſimile corpori; nec ille fuſus et candore mixtus rubor, ſanguis eſt, ſed quædam ſanguinis ſimilitudo. De nat. Deor. lib. i.

"a certain

"a certain reſemblance of blood." Ovid alludes to this ſame tenderneſs and warmth of pencil [*d*].

In graceful act her ſea-wet locks compreſs'd,
Send the quick drops which trickle down her breaſt,
O'er her bright ſkin the melting bubbles ſpread,
And clothe her beauties in a ſofter ſhade.

[*e*] Apelles a little before his death attempted a ſecond Venus, which was to have ex-

[*d*] Sic madidos ſiccat digitis Venus uda capillos,
Et modo maternis tecta videtur aquis.
Lib. xi. Triſt.

To the ſame purpoſe the epigrammatiſt Auſonius,
Ut complexa manu madidos ſalis æquore crines,
Humidulis ſpumas ſtringit utraque comis.

[*e*] Apelles Veneris caput, et ſumma pectoris politiſſima arte perfecit: Reliquam pratem corporis inchoatam reliquit. Lib. i. Ep. 9.

Nemo pictor eſt inventus, qui Veneris eam partem, quam Apelles inchoatam reliquiſſet, abſolveret; oris enim pulchritudo, reliqui corporis imitandi ſpem auferebat. De Officiis, lib. iii.

ceeded

ceeded the firſt; but died, juſt as he had finiſhed the head and breaſts. We are told, that no painter could be prevailed on to complete this figure; the idea, the character, the ſtyle of deſign were determined; it ſhould ſeem then, that what they dreaded, was, a compariſon of their tints with his. It is certain, the reputation of this painter was not owing to great compoſitions; many of his moſt celebrated works were [*f*] ſingle figures, and, ſome of them, painted from the life; a practice, which naturally produces, as is proved in Titian, an excellency in colouring; as this is only to be learnt, by an accurate and diligent obſervance of the mixed and ſubtile tints in nature. Accordingly, Pliny tells

[*f*] Fecit Apelles Antigonum thoracatum, cum equo incedentem: Peritiores artis præferunt omnibus ejus operibus eundem regem ſedentem equo. Alexandrum et Philippum quoties pinxerit, enumerare ſupervacuum eſt. Plin. xxxv. 10.

us,

us, that he [*g*] "painted a hero naked, in "which he challenged nature herſelf." But, above all, Propertius pays him the prettieſt compliment, and, at the ſame time, gives us the juſteſt notion of his merit, when, diſſuading his miſtreſs from the uſe of paint, he recommends to her to truſt to her real complexion; which he compares to the [*b*] native carnation of Apelles. ——

[*g*] Pinxit et heroa nudum; eâque picturâ naturam ipſam provocavit. Lib. xxxv. 10.

[*b*] The common objection to the colouring of Apelles, is, that he uſed but four colours: For this we have the authority of Pliny, who, at the ſame time, names the colours, viz. black, white, red and yellow. Now, as it does not ſeem poſſible to form a perfect carnation from theſe, we muſt either ſuppoſe that Pliny was miſtaken, or, that the praiſes beſtowed on the colouring of Apelles, by all the beſt judges of antiquity, and by Pliny himſelf among the reſt, were not juſt. There is a paſſage in Cicero, which, I think, clears this difficulty, and proves that Pliny was miſtaken; it is as follows: Similis in pictura ratio eſt, in

Qualis Apelleis eſt color in tabulis.

Thus making it a merit in nature, to riſe to a competition with art. By attempting to prove that colouring was the great excellence of Apelles, it muſt not be inferred from hence, that he was wanting in the other parts: The age in which he lived, was diſtinguiſhed above all thoſe before and after, by a perfection in deſign; a weakneſs therefore in this, would not have paſſed uncenſured in ſo capital a painter. The reſemblance, likewiſe, in the praiſes beſtowed on him, with thoſe, which, in later times have been attributed to Correggio,

qua Zeuxim, et Polygnotum, et Timantem, et eorum, qui non ſunt uſi plus quatuor coloribus, *formas* et *lineamenta* laudamus. At in Aëtione, Nicomacho, Protogene et Apelle, jam perfecta ſunt omnia. Thus, thoſe who uſed but four colours, are praiſed for their *proportions* and *characters* only; but, Apelles is diſtinguiſhed from them, and declared to be perfect in every branch of his art. The inference is obvious.

the great maſter in the clear obſcure, gives juſt reaſon to ſuppoſe, that he was in this particular, equal, if not ſuperior to any of his time. I would recommend this to the obſervation of thoſe, who, on a compariſon of modern with ancient painting, are ſo ready to ſuppoſe the advantage on the ſide of the former; as I do likewiſe all that I have offered on the character of Apelles, to thoſe ſanguine admirers of the Roman School, who conſider colouring as a kind of ſuperfluity in paint. Having thus far ſhewn the merit of colouring, ſo far as it is productive of truth and beauty; you may expect I ſhould ſay ſomething of a branch much cultivated and admired by the moderns; I mean that harmony and tone, which ſpring from a happy diſpoſition of variegated draperies: A perfect knowledge of the union and oppoſition of colours, together with the effects of their different ſhades and reflections, requires,

no

no doubt, great ſtudy and practice; but I apprehend, that too great an attention to this flattery of the eye, has often made our moderns neglectful of the more eſſential parts. That this was the caſe in the inferior æra of ancient painting, we have the authority of Dionyſius Halicarnaſſeus: "[*i*] The "paintings of the ancients, (ſays he) were "ſimple and unvaried in their colouring; "but correct in their drawing; and diſtin-"guiſhed by their elegance: Thoſe which "ſucceeded, leſs correct in drawing, were "more finiſhed, more varied in their lights "and ſhades; truſting their effects to the "multitude of their colours." You will obſerve, that this boaſted ſcience of the moderns, was, to the ancients, a ſymptom

[*i*] Αρχαιαι γραφαι χρωμασιν ειργασμεναι ἁπλως, και ουδεμιαν εν τοις μιγμασιν εχουσαι ποικιλιαν, ακριβειις δε ταις γραμμαις, και πολυ το χαριεν εν ταυταις εχουσαι· Αι δε μετ' ἐκεινας, ευγραμμοι μεν ἦσαν, εξειργασμεναι δε μαλλον, σκιᾳ τε και φωτι ποικιλλομεναι, και εν τῳ των μιγματων πληθει την ισχυν εχουσαι. Dion. Hal. in Iſæo, p. 167. ed. Oxon.

of the decay of paint: And indeed, can the happieſt effect in this kind, that ever flowed from the pencil of Titian, make us amends for his frequent errors in drawing, or poverty of character? Can the beſt painted drapery of a Carrache, or Guido, balance the want of grace and beauty in the one, of warmth and expreſſion in the other? Apelles ſeeing a Helen, that had been painted by one of his ſcholars, loaded with ornaments: Cried out, [*k*] "So, young man! not "able to paint her beautiful, thou haſt "made her fine." When I reflect on the authority of the writers, and the agreement of their notions on the ſubject of colouring, I am inclined to believe, that the ancients were equal, if not ſuperior to the moderns in the moſt eſſential parts: I ſhould lay little ſtreſs on general praiſes, or the extra-

[*k*] Ω μειρακιον, μη δυναμενος γραψαι καλην, πλουσιαν εποιησας.

vagance

vangance of admiration; becauſe, it is natural to us to praiſe the beſt we know: But, when I meet with diſtinctions, which mark the degrees of perfection, and with effects, which can proceed but from the Higheſt, I can no longer doubt. I ſhall offer you an inſtance in each kind, which ſtrike me as deciſive. Parrhaſius and Euphranor had each painted a Theſeus; "[*l*] Euphra- "nor objected to his rival, that his Theſeus "looked as if he had fed on roſes, his own "as if he had fed on fleſh." What more could we ſay of Titian and Barocci? Yet, this ſlight and florid ſtyle, was not the conſtant manner of Parrhaſius; Pliny tells us, that he painted two warriors, one of which ruſhing to the battle ſeemed to ſweat; the other, ſtripped of his armour, was ſeen to

[*l*] Ευφρανωρ τον Θησια τον ἑαυτου, τῳ Παρρασιου παρεξαλε· λεγων, τον μεν ἐκεινου ῥοδα βεβρωκεναι, τον δε ἑαυτου κρεα βοεια. Plutarch. Bellone an pace clariores fuerint Athenienſes.

pant. What a warmth, what a tenderneſs of pencil? Can paint expreſs that melting diffuſion, that dewy moiſture, which ſprings from a quickening perſpiration? The melloweſt tints of the Venetian ſchool furniſh no ſuch ideas. Our notions of excellence are too much limited by our experience; had we never ſeen better colouring than that of the Galatea of Raphael, a deſcription of the Venus of Titian would paſs for extravagant. Why might not the Greek ſchool have been as far ſuperior to the Venetian, as this is to the Roman? We will now purſue the ſame method we propoſed before, and conſider the colouring of the moderns in their greateſt maſter Titian.

B. THOUGH I confeſs this was the rule propoſed, yet, I muſt take the liberty to break in upon it, and to beg, that you would firſt give your opinion of the colouring of Raphael.

THE

THE advances of ſuch a painter in every branch of his art, are worthy our obſervation; particularly too, as I find the critics much divided on this point, ſome holding him to be an excellent, others an indifferent colouriſt.

A. RAPHAEL, at his ſetting, out, had no other guide than his own genius; as, the painters his predeceſſors, could furniſh him with no examples to imitate. After ſome time, he learnt from Fra. Bartholomeo a better ſtyle; his touch became more vigorous, his colouring grew warmer, and he finiſhed leſs; yet, he ſtill preſerved too great a ſameneſs; and all his perſonages had the ſame brown and duſky complexion. He perſiſted a long time in this taſte; and, one may venture to affirm, that he never wholly abandoned it. In his picture of the diſpute of the ſacrament, which is the beſt

coloured of all his works in freſco, one diſcovers a difference between the carnation of his angels and men; — ſuch a circumſtance would not be remarked in our beſt colouriſts; who preſerve this diſtinction, not only in different beings, but likewiſe in the different ſexes and ages. In the St. Jerome of Correggio, the complexion of the ſaint, the angel, the child, the mother, and the Magdalen, are all varied, agreeable to their different ages, natures, and characters. In his ſchool of Athens, Raphael was more bold, and leſs finiſhed; and, changing ſtill his manner in the Heliodorus, he painted in a ſtyle more free and varied; though yet, in the delicate, he was ſhort of perfection. At length, his paſſion for deſign, made him negligent of colouring; as we ſee in the Incendio di Borgo. About this time, he began to paint with leſs diligence; and having eſtabliſhed his character, left much to his ſcholars; till at length, finding his reputation

putation diminiſhed, he determined to re-eſtabliſh it, by exerting his whole ſkill and knowledge in his transfiguration. The colouring of this is eſteemed good; yet, from that quality or fameneſs, which I noticed before, his fleſh is ſtill hard and dry. His demitints were compoſed merely of lights and ſhades, whence they retained always a greyiſh and duſky caſt; and, whereas, a fine and delicate ſkin, has a greater variety of tints, than the groſs; Raphael, not poſſeſſing this variety, his carnations are generally coarſe and denſe. We muſt obſerve in this place, that the paintings of Raphael in freſco, are better coloured than thoſe in oil: As the firſt was his favourite practice, he left the ſecond moſtly to his ſcholars, particularly to Julio Romano; contenting himſelf with retouching and finiſhing: For this reaſon, we cannot ſo well judge of his paintings in oil: In which, ſuch as we ſee them, he is much inferior, with reſpect to colouring,

colouring, to Correggio and Titian; but, in freſco, he is ſuperior to all.

B. YOUR obſervations on the failings of Raphael, will be as ſhades to the merit and beauty of Titian.

A. PORTRAIT painting has all along been the favourite practice of the Venetian ſchool. This conſtant imitation of nature, has led them into the knowledge of thoſe various tints, by which ſhe at once diſtinguiſhes, and expreſſes the different carnations. To deſcribe, what colours, or mixtures of them, produce thoſe various appearances, is the mechanic part of the art; our ſubject is the ideal. We may compare, or determine the degrees of merit in the beſt painters, without following minutely their mechanic proceſs; I can affirm, for inſtance, without danger of being contradicted, that Correggio has not the tenderneſs or delicacy of

Titian: His fleſh is too firm; the ſkin too much ſtretched; the humid of our compoſition is not ſufficiently marked. An artiſt might tell us, that theſe defects proceed from a colouring too yellow or red; from demitints too much verging on the green; whereas, nature, and the paintings of Titian, prove, that, in clear and tranſparent ſkins, the humid ever produces a bluiſh caſt.

BUT, to leave this matter to thoſe whoſe province it is. I ſhall content myſelf, in this place, with obſerving, that in colouring, [*m*] Titian, of all the moderns, comes the neareſt to nature, and of courſe to perfection. To enlarge more particularly on his merit, would be but a repetition of the

[*m*] Might I preſume to cenſure the colouring of Titian in any particular, it would be in this, that his male and female tints (if I may ſo call them) are not ſufficiently diſtinguiſhed: They are both extremely tender and animated, but, the colouring in his women is too vigorous and maſculine.

remarks,

remarks which I have already offered on the colouring of the ancients: Let us apply thoſe remarks to his works, they will reciprocally illuſtrate each other.

B. I AM ſenſible, from the nature of the ſubject, as likewiſe from what you have already touched on, that a more minute examination of this matter would embarraſs us in the mechanic. You have ſatisfied me, how far colouring is an aid to beauty, and neceſſary to truth: You have ſhewn, how highly it was eſteemed by the critics, how induſtriouſly cultivated by the artiſts of antiquity. By marking the failings of Raphael, and proportioning the merit of Corregio, you have led me into a feeling of the mellow and tender tints of Titian. It would be unreaſonable to exact more from you on this point; but there is another, on which I muſt beg you to be more explicit; I mean the general tone or harmony of colours; in

which, you juſt now ſuppoſed the moderns to be much ſuperior to the ancients.

A. MY ſuppoſition was grounded on the obſcurity of their writers, and the difference of their practice. The ancients verſed in the nude, derived from this, as I have before obſerved, their elegance and correctneſs in deſign. They were no leſs indebted to it, for their truth and beauty of colouring. The moderns, on the other hand, particularly the Venetians, accuſtomed to clothe their figures, in velvet, ſilks, woolen, linen and the like, were naturally led into an obſervance of the different [*n*] effects of their

[*n*] We may form a general idea of the various effects of reflections from the following examples: If a blue be reflected on a yellow, the latter becomes greeniſh; if on a red, the red becomes purple; and ſo on through a variety of combinations: And as the white is of a nature to receive all the colours, and to be tinged with that of each reflection, the painter muſt be careful how his carnations may be affected by the ſeveral reflections.

reflections;

reflections: as, of the accord or diſagreement in their appoſition. In order to be convinced, that this accord or diſagreement is not fantaſtical, we need but obſerve the rainbow in its full diſplay of colours; at which time, their union is perfect: Let the red, the blue, or yellow diſappear, it is entirely diſturbed. In the ſame manner, place green and yellow or yellow and red together in a picture, they are evidently at variance; let the blue interpoſe, their correſpondence is reſtored. Rubens has painted in imitation of the rainbow; all the colours co-operate; the effect is good but accidental; but, in Titian and Correggio, this arrangement is the reſult of ſcience, it is a harmony, which ſprings from a judicious and happy union of conſenting colours.

B. IT ſhould ſeem that the Mexicans were great maſters of this harmony or correſpondence of colours, of which, Antonio de

de Solis, the elegant author of the Conqueſt of Mexico, gives the following remarkable inſtance. "Among the preſents ſent to "Cortez from the emperor, was a quanti- "ty of plumes and other curioſities, made "of feathers; whoſe beauty and natural "variety of colours found on rare birds "that country produces, they ſo placed and "mixed with wonderful art, diſtributing "the ſeveral colours, and ſhadowing the "light with the dark ſo exactly, that, with- "out making uſe of artificial colours, or "of the pencil, they could draw pictures, "and would undertake to imitate nature.

"IN another place, Montezuma is de- "ſcribed ſeated on a chair of burniſhed "gold, which glittered through the vari- "ous works of feathers, placed in hand- "ſome proportion about, the nice diſtri- "bution of which, in ſome meaſure, ſeem- "ed to outvie the coſt of the metal."

A. THE

A. THE example you have produced in the practice of the Mexicans, is an extraordinary inſtance of the happy effect from an union of colours; and it is probable that their artiſts were, in this particular, nothing inferior to the Italians. Their ſkill, in waving thoſe various colours into a kind of feathered tapeſtry, or Moſaick, and forming in them regular pictures, and lively imitations of nature, far exceeds the deſcriptions we meet with, of the Babylonian tiſſues: As, in their painted language, they evidently reſemble, and ſeem to have excelled the hieroglyphicks of the Egyptians.

B. WHEN we meet with ſuch ſtrokes of reſemblance in the efforts of human wit, among nations cut off from all intercourſe with each other, we are moved with a kind of pleaſing ſurpriſe; ſome treat them as the inventions of hiſtorians; others account for

for them by ſuppoſed, though undiſcovered, communications; and yet, to conſider things juſtly, nothing can be more natural; the ſeeds of ingenuity, like thoſe of good ſenſe, are ſown in all ſoils; and it is no more extraordinary, that their productions ſhould be alike, than, that the oranges of New-Spain ſhould reſemble thoſe of Old.

DIALOGUE VI.

Of the CLEAR OBSCURE.

A. [*o*] I AM perſuaded, that notwithſtanding all the pains you have taken, to form a juſt idea of the Clear obſcure, from the writings of Vaſari, Felibian, and the reſt, you will agree with me, that you have more ſatisfaction in this matter, from a ſingle glance at a picture of Correggio, than from all you have ever read on that ſubject. Whether this proceeds from a want of knowledge in thoſe writers, or our ignorance of the mechanic of the art, which they are ſo apt to confound with the ideal,

[*o*] Tandem ſeſe ars ipſa diſtinxit, et invenit lumen atque umbras, differentiâ colorum alterna vice ſeſe excitante. Plin. lib. xxxv. c. 5.

I ſhall

I ſhall not take upon me to determine: But, certain it is, had we not before our eyes the examples to which they refer us, we ſhould be often at a loſs for their meaning. Now, in treating of the Clear obſcure of the ancients, we have neither the works [*p*] nor writings of their painters to guide us. Happily, their claſſic authors, men of parts and erudition, were univerſally admirers of this art. Hence their frequent alluſions to it; their metaphors borrowed from it; with the deſcriptions of particular paintings, and their effects. In theſe laſt we cannot be deceived; like effects, in picture, as in nature, muſt proceed from uniform cauſes: And when

[*p*] I do not mention in this place the paintings found at Herculaneum, becauſe I cannot look on them as of a claſs to reſt on them the merits of the ancient artiſts. There are beauties, it is true, ſcattered throughout them; but, they are the beauties *morientis artis*, of an art in its decline; ſuch as Pliny deſcribes it to have been in his time; when, as he feelingly laments, there was *nulla nobilis pictura*.

we find theſe to correſpond exactly with our own obſervations on the works of the moderns, this analogy leads us into a certainty, as to the ſimilitude of the means by which they were produced.

B. SUCH inferences as theſe, when they are natural and unforced, are more concluſive than poſitive aſſertions; for we are more apt to be deceived by authority, than by the reaſon of things.

A. [*q*] "LONGINUS obſerves, that, if we "place in parallel lines, on the ſame plane, "a bright and an obſcure colour, the for-"mer ſprings forward, and appears much "nearer to the eye." Hence we may remark, that when painters would give a pro-

[*q*] Επι του αυτου επιπεδου παραλληλων εν χρωμασι της σκιας τι και φωτος, ὁμως προυκβαλλα τε το φως τας ὀψεσι, και ου μονον εξοχον, αλλα και εγγυτερω φαινεται πολυ φαινεται. Longinus, ſect. xviii.

jection

jection to any part of a figure, as the breaſts of a virgin, and the like, they throw its extremities into ſhade; that theſe retiring from the eye, the intermediate parts may have their juſt relief. From this ſimple law of nature, ſprings all the magic of the Clear obſcure; not only parts are diſtinguiſhed, but intire figures are detached from their fond; ſeem ſurrounded by air; and meet the imagination with all the energy of life. Thus Philoſtratus prettily deſcribes the picture of a Venus: "[r] The "goddeſs will not ſeem to be painted, but "ſprings from the canvaſs as if ſhe would "be purſued." The ſame writer tells us, that Zeuxis, Polygnotus, and Euphranor, were, above all things, [s] attentive, to ſhade happily, and animate their figures;

[r] Ου βουλεῖται γεγραφθαι δοκειν η θεος, ικανῶς δε οἱα λαλεισθαι. De pictura Veneris, lib. ii. p. 810.

[s] Το ευσχιον προσασαιλο, και ευπνουν, και το ισχυν τε και εξεχον. In vita Apollonii, lib. ii. p. 72.

by which he insinuates, that animation, or the soul of painting, owes its being to a just conduct of lights and shades: And hence it was, no doubt, that the paintings of Parrhasius were termed * realities; they being possessed of such a force of Clear obscure, as to be no longer the imitations of things, but the things themselves: Agreeable to this, is the observation of an ancient writer, "That in painting, [*t*] the contour "of the illumined part, should be blended "with and lost in the shade; for on this, "joined to the advantage of colouring, de-"pend animation, tenderness, and the simi-"litude to truth."

* Ἀψευδεις.

[*t*] Δει των σκιαν και την γραμμην παρεμφαινεσθαι επι της γραφεος. Το γαρ εμψυχον και το ἁπαλον, και το μεμιμημενον την αληθειαν, συν τη χρησιοτητι των χρωματων, μαλιστα γινεται δια τουτων. Theages Pythagoricus apud Stobæum.

B. OVID

B. OVID thus marks this tranſition of colours in his deſcription of the rainbow [*u*].

A thouſand colours gild the face of day,
With ſever'd beauties, and diſtinguiſh'd ray;
Whilſt in their contact they elude the ſight,
And loſe diſtinction in each others light.

A. A REMARK made by Petronius Arbiter, on certain paintings of Apelles, points out the happy effects of this delicacy of

[*u*] In quo diverſi niteant cum mille colores,
Tranſitus ipſe tamen ſpectantia lumina fallit,
Uſque adeo quod tangit idem eſt, tamen ultima diſtant. Metam. lib. vi.

Videmus in Iride aliquid flammei, aliquid lutei, aliquid cærulei, et alia in *Picturæ modum* ſubtilibus lineis ducta, ut ait Poeta; ut an diſſimiles colores ſint, ſcire non poſſis, niſi cum primis extrema contuleris; uſque adeo mira arte naturæ, quod a ſimillimis coepit in diſſimilia deſinit. Seneca Nat. quæſt. lib. i. c. 3.

pencil. "[x] With ſuch ſubtilty, ſuch a "likeneſs to nature, were the extremities "of the figures blended with their ſhades, "that you muſt have taken what was be-"fore you for real life." Nicias the Athenian is praiſed by Pliny, for his knowledge in the Clear obſcure; "[y] He preſerved "the lights and ſhades, and was particu-"larly careful, that his paintings ſhould "project from the canvaſs." But, the great-

[x] Tanta enim ſubtilitate extremitates imaginum erant ad *ſimilitudinem* præciſæ, ut crederes etiam animorum eſſe picturas. In Satyrico.

Men of a refined taſte, have a feeling of thoſe delicacies, which eſcape the notice of common obſervers; thus Pliny, ambire enim debet ſe extremitas ipſa et ſic deſinere, ut promittat alia poſt ſe, offendatque etiam quæ occultat.

This artifice of withdrawing the outline imperceptibly from the eye, is that which gives to bodies their roundneſs or projection: It was much ſtudied by the ancients, and too much neglected by Raphael; whoſe contours are ſometimes ſo marked, that his figures appear too evidently to be of a piece with the canvaſs.

[y] Lumen et umbras cuſtodivit, atque ut eminerent e tabulis picturæ, maxime curavit. Lib. xxxv—11.

eſt

eſt effect in this kind, is by the ſame attributed to the Alexander of Apelles, in the character of Jupiter the thunderer: "[z] "The fingers (ſays he) ſeem to ſhoot for-"ward, and the thunder to be out of the "picture." This paſſage is too ſtriking to need a comment. Let us compare the idea we receive from this, with the happieſt productions of the modern artiſts; what could we expect more from the magick pencil of Correggio? I mean as to the effect of clear obſcure; for, I am at a loſs, from whom to expect, the beauty and grace of an Alexander, united to the majeſty and ſplendor of a Jove. If it appears from what I have offered, that the painter can by a nice conduct of light and ſhade, give to the characters he brings on the ſcene a kind of real exiſtence: So can he, by a par-

[z] Pinxit et fulmen tenentem; digiti eminere videntur, et fulmen extra tabulam eſſe. Lib. xxxv. 10.

tial

tial diſtribution of this advantage, give them an evident preference one to the other; and by adding a degree of ſplendor to each character, proportioned to its importance in the drama, he becomes maſter of a beautiful gradation, no leſs ſatisfactory to the underſtanding, than pleaſing to the eye.

SINCE I cannot offer you an example of this in any of the ancient paintings now to be ſeen, I ſhall remind you of a piece of poetic painting, in which you will find every circumſtance of dignity and beauty, ſet off with the fineſt effect of Clear obſcure, that, perhaps, ever entered into the imagination of either poet or painter. It is, where Virgil introduces Æneas into the preſence of Dido [*a*].

[*a*] Vix ea fatus erat, cum circumfuſa repente
Scindit ſe nubes, et in æthera purgat apertum.
Reſtitit Æneas, claraque in luce refulſit,

Scarce

Scarce had he ſpoke, when lo! the burſting cloud
Melts into air: Confeſs'd the hero ſtood,
Mark'd by the form and ſplendor of a god;
The rays maternal round his temples play,
And gild his beauties with a brighter day;
Theſe the fond mother ſtudious to improve,
Breath'd on his perſon all the powers of love;
Thro' his long winding locks the magic flows,
Beams from his eyes, and in each feature glows.

There is ſomething in this deſcription ſo truly picturesque, it breaks upon the imagination with ſuch a ſudden energy of Clear obſcure, that I am perſuaded, the poet muſt have had in his eye, ſome celebrated picture in this ſtyle. It is eaſy to diſtinguiſh, when the arts borrow their ideas one from another, and the lights which they ſo commu-

Os, humeroſque Deo ſimilis: Namque ipſa decoram
Cæſariem nato Genetrix, lumenque Juventæ
Purpureum, et lætos oculis afflarat honores.
Æneid. i. ver. 590.

nicate

nicate and receive, reverberate, and prove reciprocally their beauties.

B. I COULD never read the paſſage you have juſt quoted, without being ſtruck with the beauty of this image; but you have ſupplied me with an adventitious pleaſure: The correſpondence of theſe ſiſter arts, acts, in ſome degree, like the harmony of conſenting voices; the idea, which they expreſs, is the ſame, but the effect is doubled in their agreement. When warmed by the deſcription of Virgil's Laocoon, we gaze on that at the Vatican, his cries are more piercing, his pains more exquiſite, and the ideas of the poet are as uniſons to thoſe of the ſtatuary.

A. THUS far I have touched on the two leading objects of the Clear obſcure; firſt, That roundneſs or projection, by which figures are diſengaged from their fond, and

ſpring, as it were, from canvaſs into life.—Secondly, The diſtinctive or picturesque diſtribution of light to the ſeveral characters introduced on the ſcene.

I SAY, I have only touched on theſe ſubjects, it being my deſign, rather to trace the outlines, than to give the full image of painting. To be equal to this laſt, I muſt have, not only an informed judgment, but a creative hand; for, without a knowledge, and practice in the mechanic, there is no venturing into the depths of this art. However, I flatter myſelf, that this ſketch, rude as it is, will carry with it more of the true features of the original, than any you could collect from the writings of our painters, or the authority of our Cicerones; and though it ſhould not give us a perfect knowledge, it will give us a pleaſing and claſſical view of our ſubject. The third care of the painter, in the Clear obſcure, if not ſo obvious,

is

is no way leſs eſſential than the former. When ſeveral objects preſent themſelves in one view to the eye, we may obſerve, that they all differ in the force of their appearance, each receiving and reflecting the rays of light variouſly, according to its peculiar form, texture, or poſition: This variety in nature, exerted in its imitation, gives to painting a wonderful air of truth; the eye meeting the ſame effects in the copy, which it has been uſed to in the original, loſes ſight of art, and receives the new creation as from the hand of nature. To this, no doubt, Philoſtratus alludes, when having propoſed [*b*] hills, woods, and rivers, as the objects

[*b*] Αλσης, και ορη, και πηγας, και τον αιθερα εν ω ταυτα. In exod. Icon. p. 763. Ed. Lip.

That the ancients excelled in Landſcape painting, we have the teſtimony of Pliny; Ludius, Divi Auguſti, ætate primus inſtituit amœniſſimam parietem picturam, villas, et porticus, ac topiarca opera lucos, nemora, colles, piſcinas, euripos, amnes, litora qualia quis optaret: Varias ibi obambulantium ſpecies, aut navigantium. Lib. xxxv. 10.

of

of paint, he adds, and the air in which they are: Now, there is no repreſenting the air otherwiſe than by its effects; the which, can be ſenſible only, in the relative appearances of ſuch objects, as are contained in it. But, of all theſe circumſtances of diverſity, the difference ariſing from their reſpective diſtances, is the moſt obvious and extenſive; this is to be diſtinguiſhed two ways by the diminution of forms; and the degreeing of colours. Theſe vary, according to the denſity, or depth of the medium, through which they are ſeen. The firſt, being the meaſurement of proportions, is regulated by the laws of perſpective: But the ſecond, though it muſt co-operate with

And Pliny the younger, deſcribing one of his Villas, in a letter to a friend, endeavours to give him the higheſt idea of it, by comparing it with a well painted landſcape. Lib. v. Ep. 6.

Let thoſe, who affirm ſo confidently, that the ancients were unacquainted with the Clear obſcure and perſpective, explain, how theſe things are to be repreſented without them.

the

the former, can be governed only by the eye, and comes within the province of the Clear obſcure; which, by ſetting its objects in full or diminiſhed lights, can mark minutely their withdrawing from the eye, and determine their ſeveral diſtances, by the relative force of their appearances. What knowledge the ancients had of theſe laws, and what uſe they made of them, may be collected from many paſſages in their writings; it will be ſufficient to quote an example of each; touching the meaſurement of forms. "[c] How pleaſing, ſays Philoſtratus, "is the artifice of the painter; for, having manned the walls with armed ſol- "diers, he preſents ſome intire, ſome half "figures; of ſome we ſee the breaſts, now

[c] Ἡδὺ το σοφισμα του ζωγραφου· περιβαλλων γαρ τοις τειχεσιν ανδρας ὁπλισμενους, τους μεν ἀχρους παρεχει ὁραν, τους δε ἡμισεας, και στηθια ενιων, και κεφαλας μονας, και κορυθας μονας, τινα δε αιχμας. Αναλογια ταυτα, ω φιλε, δει γαρ κλιπτεσθαι τους ὀφθαλμους τοις επιπεδοις κυκλοις συναπτοντας. Philoſtratus, lib. i. p. 768. Ed. Lipſ.

"the

" the helmets, and laſt of all their ſpears:
" This is proportion, young man; for,
" the objects muſt thus ſteal from the eye,
" as it follows the ſeveral groupes through
" their proper gradations." The ſame author, is equally explicit, concerning the gradation of colours; for, deſcribing in a picture, the effects of viſion through water, he obſerves, " [*d*] That the fiſh near the
" top ſeemed black; the next to them, leſs
" ſo; the next to thoſe begin to elude the
" eye; now they are ſhadowy, now wa-
" tery, and now mere fancy; for, the eye,
" as it deepens in the water, finds its powers
" to grow dull and confuſed."

B. You have advanced, that, to give depth to a perpendicular plane, and of

[*d*] Μιλανες μεν οἱ ανω δοκουσιν, ὑπερ δε οἱ ἐφεξης. οἱ δε μετ' ἐκεινους, ηδη παραψαυοντες της ὀψεως. εἰτα σκιωδεις, εἰτα ὑδαροι, εἰτα ὑποτυπωσεις. Καταβαινουσα γαρ εις το ὑδωρ ἡ ὀψις αμβλυνεται διαλειβουσι τα ἐν αὐτῃ. Phil. Icon. lib. i. c. Piſcatores, p. 784.

courſe, the degreeing and diſtancing of objects, is the province of the Clear obſcure: It ſhould ſeem, that the modern ſculptors have not thought ſo, when, without any ſuch aids, they have attempted in their baſſo Relievo's to produce the ſame effects.

A. THEIR ill ſucceſs juſtifies my obſervation; their firſt line of figures, only, has a plane to reſt on; the others are ſuſpended, and, contrary to the laws of nature, as they retire from the eye, and diminiſh in proportion, they riſe in height; inſomuch, that the feet of the hindmoſt are often on a parallel with the knees of the foremoſt. The ancients were too wiſe to give into ſuch an abſurdity; their purſuit, in all their works, was a good effect; and nothing could have a worſe than this. We therefore find, that in ſculpture, they attempted not to mark their diſtances, otherwiſe, than by a ſimple diminution of the Relievo; but, left to painting,

painting, what ſculpture could not aſſume, the deception of the Clear obſcure.

B. YET, from this, which was an inſtance of their good ſenſe, has been drawn an argument of their ignorance; and, becauſe they did not force the laws of the Clear obſcure into ſculpture, to which they are aliens; it has been inferred, that they knew not their connection with painting, out of which they naturally grow.

A. I HAVE, I think, both from reaſon and authority, proved the weakneſs of this ſuppoſition; but, ſhould you ſtill have the leaſt doubt, the teſtimony of Virtruvius muſt intirely remove it. By this, it will appear, that the Greek painters, not only knew the rules and ſtudied the effects of perſpective; but that their greateſt philoſophers, and mathematicians, thought it worthy their attention, to reduce theſe ef-

fects to ſure and determined laws. "[*e*] Aga-
" tharcus was the firſt who painted a ſcene,
" at the time when Æſchylus exhibited his
" tragedies at Athens: He has left a com-
" mentary on this ſubject. From this hint,
" Democritus and Anaxagoras wrote on
" perſpective; explaining, in what manner
" we ſhould, agreeable to the appearances
" in nature, from a central point, make the
" lines to correſpond with the eye, and the
" direction of the viſual rays: So that, from
" a ſeeming confuſion, may reſult a natural
" effect; and the ſcene become a true re-
" preſentation of buildings; And, that

[*e*] Agatharcus primum, Athenis Æſchylo docente tragoediam, ſcenam fecit; et de eâ re commentarium reliquit: Ex eo moniti Democritus et Anaxagoras, de eadem re ſcripſerunt, quemadmodum oporteat ad aciem oculorum, radiorumque extenſionem, certo loco centro conſtituto, ad lineas naturali ratione reſpondere; uti de incertâ re, certæ imagines ædificiorum in ſcenarum picturis redderent ſpeciem; et quæ in directis planiſque frontibus ſint figuratæ, alia abſcedentia, alia prominentia eſſe videantur. In Præf. lib. vii.

" thoſe

" thoſe objects which are drawn on a per-
" pendicular plane, may appear, ſome re-
" tiring from the eye, others advancing to-
" wards it." You will obſerve on this paſ-ſage, that the painter was before-hand with the philoſopher; and by imitating the various effects of viſion, had worked himſelf into the myſtery of its laws. So that in this, as in many other caſes, practice, inſtead of being the child, was the parent of ſcience.

B. You have fully vindicated the ſcience of the ancients in the particular before us, and diſſipated that cloud, with which the vanity of the moderns had obſcured it; I am afraid, the more we examine any pretended advantage over them, the leſs reaſon we ſhall find to triumph.

A. HAVING thus given a ſketch of the three principal objects of the Clear obſcure;

it will be ſufficient to mention the fourth, as it ſeems to ſpring of itſelf from a juſt exertion of the former; I mean the union of the Clear obſcure. This is, when the particular accidents of lights and ſhades ſo cooperate, as to produce, in the general, a fine effect; and that the picture ſends forth ſuch a proportion of light, as is moſt pleaſing to the eye, and advantageous to its ſeveral objects. Of this, if I underſtand him right, Pliny ſpeaks in the following paſſage. "[*f*] Now ſplendor was added, this is a "different thing from light; but, being "the reſult of light and ſhade, it was there-"fore called the tone." And Plutarch, ſpeaking of the painting of Dionyſius [*g*], uſes force and the tone as ſynonymous; and

[*f*] Adjectus eſt ſplendor, alius hic quam lumen: quem, quia inter hoc et umbram eſſet, appellaverunt TONON. Lib. xxxv. 5.

[*g*] Τα Διονυσιου ζωγραφηματα, ισχυν εχοντα και τονον. Plutarch in Timoleonte.

with

with reaſon, as it is this accord or harmony of the Clear obſcure, that gives to painting its firſt and ſtriking effect. This it is that enchants us, in the Nativity, and other pieces of Correggio; and to repreſent its power in the ſtrongeſt light, I need but obſerve, that where this is, we are charmed by a Caravaggio; where it is wanting, we look coldly on a Raphael.

B. I HAVE often thought, when I have had before me a painting of the Roman ſchool, that it was like looking at a proſpect in a gloomy day: The beauties of nature are there; but they want that, which ſhould illumine and embelliſh them. The union of the Clear obſcure, ſuch as you have deſcribed it, is the ſun of picture.

A. You have expreſſed it juſtly; for it is not only pleaſing in its general effect, but gives vigour and warmth to each particular

object; and beſtows on them, like the breath of Venus, the *lætos honores*, thoſe gladſome beauties, which raiſe them above the condition of an ordinary appearance.

B. WHEN I conſidered how little ſatisfaction I had received on this ſubject, from the writings of the moderns, I did not imagine that you could ever clear this obſcurity, by lights borrowed from thoſe of the ancients; eſpecially, as I have been accuſtomed to believe, [*b*] that their painters were but ſuperficially, if at all, verſed in this branch of their art. You have explained ſo fully the different powers and merits

[*b*] Some have aſſerted roundly, that the ancients were unacquainted with the Clear obſcure; others (who conſider, that a certain degree of it is inſeperable from the very nature of painting) ſuppoſe, that, what they knew of it, was nothing more than the mere effect of imitation; without principles or ſcience. Had this been the caſe, is it to be imagined, that ſo judicious a critic as Cicero, would have ſpoken of the

of

of the Clear obſcure, that I think, in order to have a reaſonable degree of knowledge in this matter, we need do no more, than apply thoſe obſervations to the paintings of the Venetian and Lombard ſchools. But yet, as in treating of this ſubject, you have mentioned Raphael and Correggio; and ſeemed to ſet them in contraſt one to the other; it would be a further ſatisfaction, ſhould you mark more particularly, in what that difference conſiſts.

A. IT ſhould ſeem, that in the Clear obſcure, Raphael knew no part but the imitative; we find the caſt of his lights and ſhades, to be no other, than the caſual ef-

lights and ſhades of eloquence; or propoſed the conduct of painters in the Clear obſcure, as worthy the imitation of orators? The paſſage is as follows, and merits a particular attention: Sed habeat tamen illa in dicendo admiratio, ac ſumma laus umbram aliquam, et receſſum, quo magis id, quod erit *illuminatum*, exſtare, atque eminere videatur. De Oratore, lib. iii.

fect

fect of the diſpoſition of his figures. Correggio, on the other hand, is intirely ideal; and conſiders the diſpoſition of his figures, merely as it tends to produce a better effect of Clear obſcure. It is no wonder therefore, that ſcience ſhould be ſuperior to accident.

RAPHAEL's ſyſtem, in the compoſition of his hiſtory, was ſimple and uniform; it conſiſted wholly in placing his ſtrongeſt lights foremoſt, and giving them a gradual diminution into the fond. Hence, moſt frequently, his figures in the firſt plane are dreſſed in white; a practice, which he learned from the Florentine ſchool: But Correggio, and the Lombard ſchool, put forward the pure and unmixed colours; ſuch as red, yellow, and blue; obſerving that the white has an effect [*i*] too tranſparent

[*i*] For this reaſon Titian brought forward his obſcures, and threw his clears into the back ground. This may appear to counteract the principle I at firſt and

and weak. This method of Raphael, ſuch as I have deſcribed it, anſwers fully in giving a roundneſs to his foremoſt figures; but it is weak in its general effect: He knew not the powers of the different colours, ſtill leſs, the beauties which they communicate and receive from each other. Correggio was a maſter of both; he not only knew their juſt balance and reciprocal influence, but extends this knowledge even to their ſhades. Thus, you may diſtinguiſh in a painting of his, the ſhade of a roſe coloured drapery, from that of a red; as you may, the ſhade of a clear white, from that of one more obſcure. It is eaſy to conceive, what advantages, an uncommon genius, and elegant imagination, muſt draw from ſuch reſources as theſe; hence ſprings that

laid down; but, as the clears and obſcures fly from each other, they mutually ſerve, according as they are placed, to throw each other forward, or at a diſtance.

warmth,

warmth, that variety, that magic, which enchants the eye, and prepoſſeſſes the underſtanding: For, certainly we do not judge of Correggio as of other painters; prejudiced by the charms of his Clear obſcure, grimace ſometimes paſſes for beauty, affectation for grace; it is by this that he always gains his end, which is to pleaſe; and we view his works with a predilection, which doubles his beauties, and blinds us to his errors.

B. FROM this repreſentation of the merit of Correggio, are we not to look upon it rather as fantaſtical than real? Does it not operate more, by ſeducing the eye, than ſatisfying the judgment?

A. THIS ſeduction is no ſmall merit in a painter; it is an union of the mechanic and ideal; it is the power of realizing his conceptions; from which, however, we ſhould

ſhould receive little pleaſure, were not thoſe conceptions in themſelves pleaſing; for the Flemiſh artiſts, are in this equal, if not ſuperior to any; but their aims are vulgar: But Correggio is, in general, amiable in his ideas, and happy in his expreſſions; he was more conſtant in his purſuit of grace than of beauty; hence he as often out-runs the one, as he falls ſhort of the other; but the ſplendor of his Clear obſcure overbears our cenſure; and he is to us, what Apelles was to the ancients, the ſtandard of the amiable and the graceful.

B. MIGHT we not, by blending the Clear obſcure of Correggio, with the compoſition of Raphael, form to ourſelves an image of perfect painting?

A. IT cannot be denied, that, had the latter been more knowing in this branch of his art, his paintings would have had a much better

better effect; and yet, nothing is more natural, than that the event ſhould be ſuch as we find it. The ideas of Correggio, tending ever to pleaſe, led him, of courſe, to the diſcovery of the means productive of his aim; Raphael, on the other hand, while he was buſied in tracing the paſſions, and intent on determining their movements, was naturally led by the ſeverity of his purſuit into a ſimplicity, or perhaps, a neglect of colouring. The reaſonableneſs of this concluſion, is confirmed by an example from antiquity; Ariſtides, who was probably the moſt ethic of all their painters, was, as we are told by Pliny, rather hard in his colouring.

B. HOWEVER general the caſe may be, it does not prove that the things are in themſelves diſcordant; on the contrary, you have ſatisfied me in the characters of Apelles and Parrhaſius, that they may very

well exiſt in one and the ſame artiſt. Can a painter be excuſable; who is weak in the moſt eſſential part of his art, namely, that which gives reality to his imitations? His aim, in general, may not be to flatter the eye; but, it ſhould be always to ſatisfy our feeling. He may think juſtly, and convey his thoughts clearly; yet, his work is but a ſbozzo, till, by colouring and the Clear obſcure, it puts on the ſemblance of truth. But, excluſive of the good effect of this ſcience in the general, there are particular caſes, in which it is indiſpenſable; as, in the repreſentations of heavenly and aërial beings: When theſe, inſtead of being ſuſpended in a bright and diaphanous glory, are nailed to a muddy fond, or wade thro', the obſtructions of a heavy dawbing, we are offended at the impropriety of their appearance; and the firſt thought we have, is, to wonder how they came there.

A. THE imagination enlightened by the warm and glowing images which it receives from the poets, bears with impatience thoſe gloomy and ponderous bodies, with which our painters people their heavens. The defect of education in our artiſts, is no where ſo ſenſible, as on theſe occaſions; what fire might a painter catch from the following deſcription;

Nor delay'd the winged ſaint
After his charge receiv'd; but from among
Thouſand celeſtial ardors, where he ſtood
Veil'd with his gorgeous wings, up ſpringing light
Flew thro' the midſt of Heaven
Par. Loſt, book v. ver. 247.

What an effect of clear obſcure is hinted in theſe lines?

Haſte hither, Eve, and worth thy ſight beheld,
Eaſtward among thoſe trees, what glorious ſhape
Comes

Comes this way moving; ſeems another morn
Ris'n on midnoon.
Par. Loſt, book v. ver. 308.

The Italian painters have no excuſe. Arioſto and Taſſo abound with beautiful and pictureſque ideas. There is not, perhaps, a finer image in poetry, than the following one by Taſſo.

" *Coſi dicendo, fiammeggiò di zelo*
" *Per gli occhio fuor del mortal uſo accenſi:*
" *Poi nel profondo dè ſuoi rai ſi chiuſe,*
" *E ſparve.* Canto xii. Stanza 93.

What a ſubject for a fine colouriſt, to delineate the form of an angel, retiring and melting into the ſplendor which ſurrounds it?

B. THE painting of Correggio alone verges on theſe poetic ideas: We acknowledge in his angels the inhabitants of heaven; crayoned in ſplendor, pellucid in

glory, their clear and animated tints breathe a divinity; they flit in air, like the ſkirtings of a paſſing cloud, they drop from heaven, like rain through an April ſun.

A. ONE would imagine that Pope had been animated with the ſpirit of Correggio, and had taken poſſeſſion of his pencil, when he thus pictured his ſylphs:

Some in the fields of pureſt æther play,
And baſk and whiten in the blaze of day.

Men of a ſuperior genius, view nature through the ſame medium, a fine imagination; ſo that, however different their arts may be in the mechanic part, they will often approach each other in the ideal. Of all the arts, poetry and painting are the moſt congenial; and we may obſerve, that as the former never appears more lovely, than when ſhe dreſſes herſelf in the beauties of painting; ſo, the latter is never ſo tranſporting,

porting, as when ſhe emulates the flights, and catches the images of poetry.

B. WHAT you have ſaid in this place of Correggio, is much to his advantage; but, you juſt now treated him rather ſlightly on the article of *Beauty*; a merit, applied to him by others as peculiar and diſtinctive: I am at a loſs to account for this oppoſition of ſentiments. A Greek philoſopher being aſked, what was Beauty? Anſwered, This was the [*k*] queſtion of a blind man; yet I am tempted to ſubject myſelf to the ſame rebuke; for without ſome explanation of this matter, we muſt ever, in our judgments on painters, contradict, or talk unintelligibly to one another.

A. I SHOULD think ſuch beauty abſolute, in which we ſhould find, a purity of colours, an elegance in the proportions, har-

[*k*] Τυφλου το ερωτημα.

mony of features, and happineſs of character.

B. EXCUSE me a minute; what do you mean in this place by character?

A. I MEAN that emanation of the mind, which marks its peculiar complexion; which inſpires the features, graces the action, and gives to the whole perſon a particular aim and ſignificance. Hence the poet,

Thus doth beauty dwell
There moſt conſpicuous, e'en in outward ſhape,
Where dawns the high expreſſion of a mind.
Pl. of the Im.

Now the reaſon why we differ ſo much in our judgments on beauty, is, that in the uſe of this word, we annex to it, ſome more, ſome fewer of the forementioned ideas; as each man differs from another, in the caſt of his imagination, or the juſtneſs of his eye.

Thus

Thus one, much delighted with the pure and vivid tints of Titian, ſhall with difficulty acknowledge beauty in the groſs complexions of Raphael, however elegant the proportions, or happy the character. A ſecond, to whom harmony of features fills his conception of beauty, ſhall admire Carlo-Maratte; to the ſurpriſe of thoſe, who feel no effect from an union of features unenlivened by expreſſion. Oppoſed to this perſon ſhall be one, with whom character alone ſtands for beauty; thus, when a Madonna of Correggio gazes on her child, with a fondneſs truly maternal; or ſmiles delighted with his playful action; he calls that beauty, which a more correct eye (obſerving that the proportions are not perfectly juſt, and the caſt of features, perhaps, even vulgar) ſhall admit to be nothing more than a pleaſing expreſſion. But, excluſive of theſe particular acceptations, we uſe this word in a ſenſe ſtill more vague and gene-

ral; for, as it is the nature of beauty, to excite in the beholders certain pleaſing ſenſations, we apply indiſcriminately the ſame title, to every thing which produces a like effect; and this is evidently the caſe, when we are flattered by the union of colours, or the charms of the Clear obſcure. Thus, an ancient writer obſerves, "[*l*] That "the moſt oppoſite colours co-operate in "the formation of beauty:" A teſtimony, which not only ſerves my preſent purpoſe, but likewiſe, brings the paintings of the ancients into the ſame point of view with thoſe of Correggio; ſhewing, that this laſt ſpecies of beauty was equally known and cultivated by both.

B. THOUGH, what you have offered, be applied only to painting, may we not extend it to common life; and account, from hence,

[*l*] Τα ναντιωτατα των χρωματων εις την του καλλους συνθηκην ὁμολογει.

for the difference of our opinions, concerning the beauty of women; each man eſteeming her moſt beautiful, who moſt readily excites in him thoſe ſenſations, which are the end of beauty?

A. OUR Britiſh Lucretius, it ſhould ſeem, thought ſo, when he tells us, that virtue

Aſſumes a various feature, to diſtruſt
With charms reſponſive to each gazers eye
The hearts of men.

Pl. of the Im.

DIALOGUE VII.

Of COMPOSITION.

A. HISTORY Painting is the repreſentation of a momentary drama: We may therefore, in treating of compoſition, borrow our ideas from the ſtage; and divide it into two parts, the ſcenery, and the drama. The excellence of the firſt, conſiſts in a pleaſing diſpoſition of the figures which compoſe the action: However trifling the pleaſure we recieve from this may appear to ſome, it is certain, that it is founded on nature, and of courſe muſt merit our attention: If we look in a clear night on a ſtarry ſky, our eyes preſently fix on thoſe parts, where the ſtars are (if I may ſo term

term it) grouped into conſtellations. The mind, indifferent to a looſe unideal diſperſion, ſeeks for ſomething of ſyſtem and œconomy; and catches at every image of contrivance and deſign. Perhaps too, there may be ſomething of harmony in a particular arrangement of objects; ſimilar to that, which ſtrikes us, in the correſpondence of ſounds, or flatters us, in the union of colours.

B. WHATEVER the principal may be, we cannot doubt of the effect. The eye charmed with the elegant diſtribution of a Lanfranc, or Pietro di Cortona, looks with coldneſs on the ſcattered compoſitions of a Domenichino; and often wiſhes for ſomething more flattering in thoſe of the great Raphael.

A. YOUR obſervation, ſo far as it touches Raphael, ſhews the neceſſity of a diſtinction in

in this place. The diſpoſition, of which we have been ſpeaking hitherto, is purely picturesque: But there is a ſecond kind, which we may call the expreſſive. When many perſons are preſent at an action, in which they are intereſted, it naturally ſets them in motion; their movements will depend on their characters and feeling; anger, love, or aſtoniſhment, ſhall with propriety be expreſſed by ſingle figures; whilſt others ſhall be collected into parties, or groupes, to communicate their fears, doubts, belief, and the like. Thus, in that inimitable picture by Leonardo da Vinci, when Chriſt, at ſupper with his diſciples, declares, that one of them ſhall betray him; they all inſtantly take the alarm: One of the youngeſt, riſing from his ſeat, his hands croſſed on his breaſt, looks on Chriſt with an action full of love and attachment to his perſon; the zealous and impatient St. Peter, throws himſelf a-croſs two or three others,

others and whiſpers the beloved diſciple, who is next to Chriſt; no doubt, to aſk his maſter who it ſhould be. The reſt are divided into parties, reaſoning and diſputing on their different ſentiments. It is eaſy to perceive, that the artiſt, intent on giving a full expreſſion to the ſentiments and paſſions becoming the occaſion, conſidered the diſpoſition of his picture, merely, as it tended to explain or add force to his principal action. This will ever be the caſe with the greateſt painters: They may ſet a juſt value on the ſcenery of their piece, but never ſacrifice to that the expreſſion of their ſubject. When Chriſt gives the keys to Peter, nothing is more natural, than that the diſciples ſhould all crowd together, to be witneſſes of an action which ſo much concerned them. This diſpoſition is true and expreſſive, but by no means pictureſque: Raphael was too wiſe, to flatter the eye, at the expence of the underſtanding; yet, where

where they could both be indulged with propriety, his compoſition was no leſs picturesque than expreſſive. In his St. Paul preaching at Athens, the diſpoſition in general is not only pleaſing, but the groupes are well imaged, and happily connected. In ſhort, the true difference between theſe artiſts, is this, with Raphael and Leonardo da Vinci, diſpoſition is an acceſſory; with Lanfranc and Pietro di Cortona, it is not only a principal, but comprehends too often the whole merit of the picture.

B. HAVING ſettled our ideas of this part which you call the ſcenery of painting; let us, if you pleaſe, examine the merit of the ancients in this article: It is the received opinion, I think, that their compoſitions in painting, like thoſe of their baſſo Relievo's, were extremely ſimple; if ſo, I cannot expect much from you on this head.

A. THIS

A. THIS opinion, is a neceſſary conſequence of that, which I have already mentioned, namely, that they were unacquainted with the laws of perſpective, and the effects of the clear obſcure. If the contrary of this be true, which, it ſeems to me, I have proved; we may very well conclude, that, poſſeſſed of the ſame means with the moderns, and at leaſt equal to them in genius, they ſhould employ them to the ſame ends. Was their compoſition ſo ſimple as it is thought, there could be, in this particular, no variety in the art, and, of courſe, no degrees of merit in the artiſts. Yet, we are told by Pliny, "[*l*] That Apelles confeſſed "Amphion to be his ſuperior in the diſ"poſition: It was then an object of attention; it muſt have been too, in the opinion of the ancients, of conſequence; for, the

[*l*] Cedebat Amphioni de Diſpoſitione.

hiſtorian

hiſtorian gives it as an extraordinary inſtance of [*m*] candor in the painter. It is probable then, that, as Apelles was the Raphael, ſo Amphion was the Lanfranc of Greece.

B. I AM inclined to believe from hence, that the firſt painters among the ancients, like thoſe among the moderns, were, as it is natural they ſhould be, more ſtudious of the expreſſive than the picturesque; and this may be the reaſon why the claſſic writers, who borrowed their ideas of painting from their capital works, have not dwelt on the article of diſpoſition; looking on it as a circumſtance inſeperable from the general expreſſion of the ſubject.

A. AND yet they are not altogether ſilent on this head: And we may find, even in

[*m*] Fuit Apelles non minoris ſimplicitatis quam artis; nam cedebat, &c. Lib. xxxv. c. 10.

them

them, ſufficient lights to ſatisfy thoſe, who ſet out with a good opinion of the taſte and genius of the ancients. Plutarch tells us, that Euphranor painted the engagement of the cavalry at the battle of Mantinea, [*n*] as if he had been inſpired. The painter had never merited ſuch ſingular praiſe, had he not wrought his ſubject to the neareſt ſemblance to truth; and that this could not have been without a particular attention to the diſpoſition, the ſame writer proves in another inſtance; when, ſpeaking of the battle fought by Araſtus againſt the Etolians, he adds, that Timanthes the painter, brought this action, as it were, before the eyes of the beholders, by the [*o*] *evidence of his diſpoſition.* Thus, it is plain, that the Inſpiration of Euphranor, and the evidence of Timanthes, flowed from the ſame excellence, an

[*n*] Ουκ ανευθουσιαστως.
De Gloria Athen. p. 346. Ed. Paris.
[*o*] Εμφανιλικως τη διαθεσει. In Arato, p. 1042.

union

union of the two kinds of diſpoſition, the expreſſive, and the pictureſque.

B. HAVING thus raiſed the curtain and examined the ſcenery, let us proceed to what you call the drama of painting.

A. IT was with great propriety ſo termed by the ancients; becauſe, like a dramatic poem, it contains, firſt, a ſubject, or fable; ſecondly, its order, or contrivance; thirdly, characters, or the manners: Fourthly, the various paſſions which ſpring from thoſe characters. Philoſtratus, ſpeaking of the compoſition of a picture, calls it in expreſs terms the [*p*] drama of the painter: Pliny has [*q*] the ſame idea, to his commendation of Nichophanes. But we ſhall be better ſatisfied of the juſtneſs of this application,

[*p*] Το δραμα του ζωγραφου.

[*q*] Cothurnus ei, et gravitas artis.

by

by examples, than by authorities. [r] It was the opinion of Nicias, one of the greateſt of the Greek painters, that the ſubject was of no leſs conſequence in painting, than the fable in poetry; and, of courſe, that great and noble actions tended to elevate and enlarge, as the contrary muſt humble and contract the genius of the painter. The ancients had great advantages in this particular; they had, not only their profane hiſtory, rich in the moſt glorious and intereſting events; but their ſacred, whilſt it furniſhed them with new ideas of the ſublime, gave no check to the pathetic. Their gods, ſuperior in grace, majeſty and beauty, were yet ſubject to all the feelings and paſſions of humanity. How unequal is the lot of the modern artiſts? employed by prieſts, or princes who thought like prieſts, their ſub-

[r] Ωιλο γαρ και την ὑποθιϲιν αὐ'την μερος ειναι της ζωγραφικης τιχνης, ὡϲπιρ τους μυθους των ποιητων. Dem. Phal. de eloc. § 76.

jects are, for the moſt part, taken from a religion, which profeſſes to baniſh, or ſubdue the paſſions: Their characters are borrowed from the loweſt ſpheres of life: Men, in whom, meanneſs of birth, and ſimplicity of manners, were the beſt titles to their election. Even their divine maſter, is no where, in painting, attended with a great idea; his long ſtrait hair, Jewiſh beard, and poor apparel, would undignify the moſt exalted nature, humility and reſignation, his characteriſtics, are qualities extremely edifying, but by no means pictureſque. Let us, for example, compare (I muſt be underſtood to mean only as ſubjects for painting) a Chriſt armed with a ſcourge, driving the money-changers out of the temple, to an Alexander, the thunder in his hand, ready to dart it on the rebellious nations. It is not in the ſublime alone, that their ſubjects are deficient; they are equally ſo in the pathetic: The ſufferings, which they moſtly repreſent,

are

are in obedience to prophecies and the will of heaven; they are often the choice of the ſufferers; and a ten-fold premium is at hand. When St. Andrew falls down to worſhip the croſs, on which he is ſoon after to be nailed; we may be improved by ſuch an example of piety and zeal; but we cannot feel for one, who is not concerned for himſelf. We are not ſo calm at the ſacrifice of Iphigenia; beautiful, innocent, and unhappy; we look upon her as the victim of an unjuſt decree; ſhe might live the object of univerſal love; ſhe dies the object of univerſal pity. This defect in the ſubject, and of habitude in the painters, accounts for the coldneſs, with which, we look in general on their works in the galleries and churches; the genius of painting waſting its powers on crucifixions, holy families, laſt ſuppers, and the like, wants nerves, if at any time the ſubject calls for the pathetic or ſublime: Of this we have an inſtance

in the transfiguration by Raphael; a Chriſt uplifted by a divine energy, dilating in glory, and growing into divinity, was a ſubject truly ſublime; it is eaſy to ſee, on this occaſion, that the painter had not that enthuſiaſtic ſpirit, or thoſe ideas of majeſty, which the ſubject required: Accordingly, his pencil is timid and unequal: It is not ſo, when he drops to the bottom of the mount, to expreſs the various feelings and ſentiments of the diciples, diſtreſſed at their inability to work a miracle in their maſters abſence. The truth was, his calm, though fertile genius, could better delineate the fine and delicate movements of the mind, which have in them more of ſentiment than paſſion. This was his true ſphere, and it is here, that we muſt ſtudy, and admire Raphael.

B. YOUR obſervations on the character of Raphael, ſhow, how eſſential to painting is that, which you call the third part of the

drama, namely, the characters or manners.

A. THE ancients thought them ſo much ſo, that they expreſsly term picture [*s*] an art deſcriptive of the manners. Ariſtotle in his poetics, ſays of Polygnotus, that he was a [*t*] painter of the manners; and objects to Zeuxis his weakneſs in this part. We have in Philoſtratus the following deſcription of a picture; "[*u*] We may inſtantly (ſays he) diſtinguiſh Ulyſſes, by "his ſeverity and vigilance; Menelaus, by

[*s*] Ηθοποιητικὸς τεχνη. Calliſtratus in Deſcrip. ſtat. Æſcul.

[*t*] Ηθογραφος.

Ariſtides Thebanus animum pinxit, et ſenſus omnes expreſſit, quos vocant Græci πθη; id eſt, perturbationes. Plin. lib. xxxv. 10.

[*u*] Επιδηλος ὁ μεν Ιθακησιος, απο του τρυφιου και ιγκεγοργοτος, ὁ δε Αγαμεμνων, απο του ηθους, του δε του Τυδεως αληθεια γραφει, γνωριζοις δ' αν και τον Τελαμωνιον, απο του βλοσυρου, και τον Δαρδανον απο του ἑτοιμου. Philoſtrat. in Antilocho.

"his mildneſs; and Agamemnon, by a "kind of divine majeſty; in the ſon of "Tydeus, is expreſſed an air of freedom; "Ajax is known by his ſullen fierceneſs; "and Antilochus by his alertneſs." To give to theſe ſuch ſentiments and actions, as are conſequential from their peculiar characters, is [x] the ethic of painting. We may judge from hence, how advantageous it muſt be to painters in general, to be verſed in claſſical ſubjects; for, they find themſelves under a neceſſity of expreſſing the manners as they flow naturally from characters predetermined. The [y] Greek painters caught their ideas from hiſtorians and poets, and tranſlated the beauties of eloquence into paint.

B. How wonderful muſt have been that genius, which, without theſe advantages,

[x] Ηθων ἱστορια. Calliſt. in Deſcrip. ſtat. Narciſſi.

[y] Apelles pinxit Dianam ſacrificantium virginum choro miſtam; quibus viciſſe Homeri verſus videtur, id ipſum deſcribentis. Plin. lib. xxxv. c. 10.

has

has all their effects? Such was our divine Raphael: He treats new ſubjects; he invents new characters: The moſt unpicturesque action, compoſed by him, ſeems to have been deſtined for paint: Chriſt gives the keys to Peter; how barren the incident! yet his pencil, like the rod of Moſes, ſtrikes a ſpring out of this rock.

A. You have deſcribed that facility, which is the gift of genius, and the image of truth: This does not conſiſt wholly, as may be imagined, in the ready execution of a conceived idea; but in the immediate perception of the juſtneſs of that idea; in a conſummate knowledge of the human heart, its various affections, and the juſt meaſure of their influence on our looks and geſtures; eaſy in promiſe, but difficult of execution; unknown, unattainable by the herd of painters, it drops from the pencil of a Raphael, Correggio, or Leonardo da Vinci. This

quality was considered by the ancients as the surest test of genius; thus Plutarch praises the paintings of [z] Nicomachus, comparing them, in happiness and facility, to the poetry of Homer. Apelles affirmed himself inferior in some points to other painters; but in this unrivalled. If we except the three, I just now mentioned, we should in vain look for this knowledge, in the crowd of modern painters. Contented with tolerable drawing, some air of beauty, and a good cast of drapery, they abandon character to the accident of features; their dramatis personæ, if we can call them such, are like the followers of Æneas, many actors with one face, *fortemque Gyam, fortemque Cloanthum*; the different echoes of one poor idea: Such characters are so far from grow-

[z] Ταις δὲ Νικομαχου γραφαις και τοις Ὁμηρου ἐπεσι, μιλα της αλλης δυναμεως και χαριτος, προσεστι το δοκειν ευκολως και ῥαδιως απειργασθαι. In Tim. Oleonte, p. 253. Ed. Paris.

ing

ing out of the ſubject, that they have always the air of Exotics, and ſeem fitter for any ſpot than that in which they are. Inſtead of placing the Bacchus and Ariadne of Carrache, in a triumphal car; we might put the miſtreſs into a cart, and ſet her lover to drive it.

B. THE profeſſors of the art, who praiſe ſo warmly the paintings in the palace Farneſe, ſhould diſtinguiſh better the mechanic part from the ideal. I have never ſeen them without regretting, that ſuch a hand to execute ſhould have been ſo ill prompted. A compoſition of this kind, though it be rich in all the other powers of paint, if it has neither beauty nor characters becoming the ſubjects, will be conſidered by a judicious obſerver, rather as the furniture than ornament of a gallery.

A. To repreſent a Juno without majeſty, or a Venus without beauty, is an inſult on our underſtandings; the peacock and dove, are not the means of diſtinction we look for: The [*a*] Juno of Polycletus is deſcribed by Maximus Tyrius, with ſnow white arms, ivory ſhoulders, beautiful eyes, in royal robes, of a majeſtic mien, and ſeated on a throne of gold.

B. THE modern ſtatuaries are ſo wholly void of character, that they are not to be

[*a*] Ἡρα, οἵαν Πολυκλείτος Ἀργείους ἐδειξε, λευκωλένον, ἐλεφαντόπηχυν, εὐώπιν, εὐειμονα, βασιλικὴν, ἱδρυμένην ἐπὶ χρυσοῦ θρόνου. Diſſert. xiv.

The ſame ſtatue is celebrated by Martial in the following epigram:

Juno, labor, Polyclete, tuus, et gloria felix,
Phidiacæ cuperent quam meruiſſe manus;
Ore nitet tanto, quanto ſuperaſſet in Ida
Judice convictas non dubitante Deas.
Junonem, Polyclete, ſuam niſi frater amaret,
Junonem poterat frater amare tuam.

Lib. x. Epig. 89.

mentioned

mentioned on this ſubject; even our beſt painters are not ſo accurate as we could wiſh: Domenichino, who excels in painting children, often gives them expreſſions which no ways become their age.

A. THE truth was, he had but one expreſſion to give them, which was that of fear; ſo that, right or wrong, they muſt be frightened; he might have learned from Parrhaſius, that an innocent ſecurity was often their trueſt characteriſtic; *pinxit pueros duos, in quibus ſpectatur ſecuritas, et ætatis ſimplicitas*, Plin. The Greek artiſts, not only excelled the moderns in the propriety of their characters, they were ſometimes ſuperior even to their own poets; let us compare the Vulcan of Homer, with that of Alcamenes; the firſt, at a banquet of the gods, limps along the buffoon of the company; "the ſecond is praiſed by Cicero,

"[*b*] for

"[*b*] for that his lameneſs was marked ſo "mildly, that it did not diſgrace him." It muſt be confeſſed, that the ſtatuary is by far more decent than the poet.

WE have thus far conſidered character in its calm expreſſion of the manners; let us now trace it in its more turbulent effects, the paſſions: It is obſerved by Tully, "[*c*] "That every motion of the mind, has from "nature its peculiar countenance. [*d*] Do "not you ſee, ſays Seneca, what vigor is "given to the eye by fortitude? what "ſteadineſs by wiſdom; what modeſty,

[*b*] Athenis laudamus Vulcanum eum quem fecit Alcamenes, in quo ſtante atque veſtito, leniter apparet claudicatio non deformis. De Nat. Deor. lib. i.

[*c*] Omnis enim motus animi ſuum quendam a natura habet vultum. De Oratore, lib. iii.

[*d*] An non vides quantum oculis det vigorem fortitudo? quantam intentionem prudentia? quantam modeſtiam et quietem reverentia? quantam ſerenitatem lætitia? quantum rigorem ſeveritas? quantam remiſſionem hilaritas? Ep. cvi.

"what

"what ſtillneſs it puts on in the expreſſion "of an awful reſpect? how it is bright-"ened by joy? how fixed by ſeverity, "how relaxed by mirth?" If ſo much of the inward habit of our minds is to be collected from this intelligence of the eyes, how much more may be traced in the general tenor of the countenance, in its agreement with the agitations of the body, the movements of the limbs, and all the various indications of action? To catch theſe ſymptoms of our inward feelings, to give them their juſt meaſure of expreſſion, and render, if I may ſo expreſs myſelf, the ſoul viſible, is the great end of dramatic painting.

B. I HAVE often thought, on examining the Laocoon by parts, that, had the foot only been diſcovered, the ſwelled veins, the ſtrained ſinews, and the irregular motion of the muſcles, might have led us into a conception of thoſe tortures, which are ſo divinely

vinely expreſſed in the face, ſo wonderfully marked throughout the whole body.

A. THE ancients are no leſs remarkable for their ſpirit in conceiving the primary idea, than for their patience in purſuing it in all its conſequences: The [*e*] expreſſion in this ſtatue, is worked up to ſuch a juſt extremity, their reigns through it ſuch an air of truth, that, as the leaſt addition would be extravagance, ſo every diminution would be a defect: We trace in it the labour of years, we feel from it the impreſſion of a minute. The ſtatuaries of Greece had no other advantage over its painters, than that they uſed more durable materials, bleſſed with equal genius, formed by the ſame education, their arts went hand in hand to perfection. If Praxiteles be celebrated by Di-

[*e*] Opus omnibus et picturæ et ſtatuariæ artis præferendum. Plin.

odorus

odorus Siculus, [*f*] for having transfuſed into marble all the paſſions of the ſoul; the ſame power is attributed by Pliny to the pencil of Ariſtides; it is not probable, that men of taſte and letters, whilſt they were eye-witneſſes of the divine character in the Apollo; of the beauty and tenderneſs of the Venus; and the wonderful expreſſion of the Laocoon; ſhould celebrate thoſe very qualities in the works of their painters, were they not eminently poſſeſſed of them. Pliny, [*g*]

[*f*] Ὁ καλαμιξας ακρως τοις λιθινοις ἐργοις τα τος ψυχης παθη.

[*g*] Timanthi vel plurimum affuit ingenii: Ejus enim eſt Iphigenia oratorum laudibus celebrata; quæ ſtante ad aras peritura, cum mœſtos pinxiſſet omnes, præcipue patruum, cum triſtitiæ omnem imaginem conſumſiſſet, Patris ipſius vultum velavit, quem digne non poterat oſtendere. Lib. xxxv. c. 10.

It has been imagined that Timanthes borrowed this thought from the following paſſage in Sophocles:

——Ως δ' ισειδεν Αγαμεμνων αναξ
Επι σφαγας τειχουσαν εις αλσος κορην,
Απεσιναξε· κωμπαλιν τρεψας καρα,
Δακρυα προχεων, ομμαθων εἰπλον προθεις.

in

in his deſcription of that famous picture of the Sacrifice of Iphigenia, by Timanthes, obſerves, "that the painter having exhauſted "ed every image of grief in the by-ſtanders "and above all in the uncle; threw a veil "over the face of the father, whoſe ſorrow "he was unable to expreſs." If the ingenious Timanthes has left us to conceive an idea, which he could not execute, Ariſtides, on the other hand, has executed that which is almoſt above conception; by him was painted "[*b*] a town taken by ſtorm, in "which was ſeen an infant creeping to the "breaſt of its mother, who, though ex"piring from her wounds, yet expreſſes an "apprehenſion and fear leaſt the courſe of "her milk being ſtopt, the child ſhould "ſuck her blood." What a perfect know-

[*b*] Hujus pictura eſt, oppido capto, ad matris morientis e vulnere mammam adrepens infans: Intelligiturque ſentire mater, et timere, ne emortuo lacte ſanguinem infans lambat. Plin. lib. xxxv. c. 10.

ledge

ledge of the human ſoul muſt this painter have had, to enter thus feelingly into her inmoſt workings! What a power, next to creative, to make ſuch tender movements ſenſible in the midſt of tortures; and the mother's fondneſs diſtinguiſhable through the agonies of death? This picture, it is probable, gave occaſion to the following epigram [*i*].

Suck, little wretch, whilſt yet thy mother lives,
Suck the laſt drop her fainting boſom gives.
She dies; her tenderneſs outlaſts her breath,
And her fond love is provident in death.

The Philoctetes of Parrhaſius is a fine image of hopeleſs wretchedneſs, of conſuming grief. The picture itſelf is happily deſcribed by the

[*i*] Ἕλκε, τάλαν, παρα μήλος· ὃν οὐκ ἔτι μαῖξον ἀμολξις,
Ἑλκυσον ὑστάλιον ναμα καλαφθιμενης.
Ἤδη γαρ ξιφεσσι λιποπνοος· αλλα τα μήλος
Φίλτρα και ἐν αϊδῃ παιδοκομειν μαθον.
Anthol. lib. iii.

epigrammatiſt, and the compliment to the painter, has the elegance and ſimplicity peculiar to the Greeks [*k*].

Drawn by Parrhaſius, as in perſon view'd,
Sad Philoctetes feels his pains renew'd.
In his parch'd eyes the deep-ſunk tears expreſs
His endleſs miſery, his dire diſtreſs.
We blame thee, painter, tho' thy art commend;
'Twas time his ſufferings with himſelf ſhould end.

We cannot well conceive an image more tender, or more affecting than this. Let terror be united with pity, the muſe of painting has completed her drama. Of this, the Ajax and Medea of Timomachus are

[*k*] Και τον απο Τρηχινος ιδων πολυωδυνον ηρω
Τονδε Φιλοκτητην εγραψε Παρρασιος.
Εν τι γαρ οφθαλμοις ισκληκοσι κωφον υποπτοι
Δακρυ, και ο τρηχυς ειλος ενεστι πονος.
Ζωογραφων ω λωτε, συ μεν σοφος, αλλ' αναπαυσαι
Ανδρα ποιων ηδη τον πολυμοχθον ἐδει.
Anthol. lib. iv.

beautiful

beautiful examples; they are but juſt mentioned by Ovid in the following lines [*l*]:

Here Ajax ſits with ſullen rage oppreſs'd.
And in Medea's eyes her crime's confeſs'd.

Philoſtratus is more particular as to the former: [*m*] We cannot (ſays he) do juſtice to the Ajax of Timomachus, whom he repreſents diſtracted, unleſs we previouſly form in our minds the image of his condition: and how natural it was, after the follies he had committed, that he ſhould ſit down, overwhelmed with ſhame, entering on the reſolution to deſtroy himſelf. This obſer-

[*l*] Utque ſedet vultu faſſus Telamonius iram;
Inque oculis facinus barbara mater habet.
Lib. ii. Triſt.

[*m*] Οὐδ' ἂν τον Αἰαντα τις τον Τιμομαχου αγαθοιτο, ὁς δη αναγιγραπται φυὴν μαινομενος, ει μη αναλαβοι τις ες τον νουν Αιαντος ειδωλον, και ὡς εικος αυτον αγκυλουσθαι τα ες τη Τροιᾳ βουκολια, καθησθαι ατιμοτερον, βουλην συνομοσαντα και ἑαυτον κλεινας. Lib. ii. de vita Apollonii, c. 10.

vation of the hiſtorian, will ſerve us as a comment on the epigrammatiſt [*n*].

Here art with nature holds a doubtful ſtrife,
And ſummons Ajax to a ſecond life:
We ſee thee raging, and in every line
The painter's fury riſes ſtill with thine:
Thy looks the anguiſh of thy ſoul diſcloſe,
And the mix'd tear is charged with all thy woes.

The Medea was a ſubject of emulation to the wits of Greece; each contending to do juſtice to thoſe inimitable expreſſions, which they thus deſcribe [*o*]:

Medea, painter, now provokes thy ſkill,
Hop'ſt thou to picture a divided will?

[*n*] Αισαν Τιμομαχου θλεον η παλεος· ηρπασε τεχνη
Την φυσιν. Ὁ γραψας ειδι σε μαινομενον,
Και συνταλυσσηθη χειρ απερ· Και τα πειραρα
Δακρυα τους λυπης σανιας εμιξε πονους.
Anthol. lib. iv.

[*o*] Την θλεαν Μηδειαν ὁτ' εγραφε Τιμομαχου χειρ,
Ζηλω, και τεκνοις ανεμιμηθεκομεσθα.

Τις

'Tis done: Behold, united by his art
The lover's frenzy, and the mother's heart;
Mark how the ſtrugglings of her ſoul appear;
Here fury flaſhes, and there melts a tear.
'Twas well, her purpoſe only you expreſs'd,
Who but Medea could ſuppart the reſt?

The ſame is touch'd again with great ſpirit in the following epigram [*p*]:

What ventrous hand the curs'd Medea drew
And brought the parricide once more in view!

Μυριον ἀρρὶ μοχθον ἰ' ηθεα δισσα χαραξη,
Ὡν το μεν εις οργαν νευε, το δ' εις ελεον.
Ἀμφω δ' ἐκπληρωσεν, ὁρα τυπον· εν γαρ ἀπειλα,
Δακρυον, εν δ' ἐλεῳ, θυμος ἀπαστριφιλαι.
Ἀρκει δ' ἀν μελλησις, ἰφα σοφος· αἱμα δι τεκνων
Ἐρειπε Μηδειη, π' ου χειρ Τιμομαχου.

Anthol. lib. iv.

[*p*] Τις σου, Κολχις ἀθεσμε, συνεγραφεν εικονι θυμον;
Τις και εν εἰδωλῳ βαρβαρον ἐιργασαῖο;
Αιει γαρ δι'ψας βριφειων φονον· η τις Ιησων
Δευτερος, η Γλαυκη τις σαλι σοι προφασις;
Ἐρρε, και εν κηρῳ παιδοκτονε· σων γαρ ἀμειρων
Ζηλων, εις ἀ θελεις, και γραφις αἰδανειαι.

Anthol. lib. iv.

Art thou by ſlighted love provok'd again
In thy child's blood thy impious hands to ſtain?
Off murdreſs! ev'n in paint thy crimes we fear;
And all the horrors of thy ſoul are here.

B. IT muſt be confeſſed, that if theſe artiſts were happy in their power to pleaſe, they were no leſs ſo, in having ſuch feeling critics, ſo capable of tranſmitting their merit to poſterity. We too have our ſhare in this happineſs; theſe deſcriptions are ſo juſt, ſo lively, ſo diſtinguiſhing, that we may look upon them as copies of thoſe divine originals. The moderns have not this advantage; all ideas of their works will vaniſh with their colours. When Arioſto celebrates Michael Angelo in the following line,

"*E Michael, piu che mortal, Angel divino.*"

this praiſe is exceſſive, not deciſive; it carries no idea.

A THE

A. THE reaſon is obvious, the artiſt did not furniſh the poet with any. Had the painters of Italy produced ſuch expreſſions as thoſe of the Ajax and Medea, the wits of that country, would not have been wanting in doing them juſtice. I may, perhaps, appear too general, when I include even Raphael in this obſervation; but if you reflect, you will find, that his expreſſions are more addreſſed to the underſtanding than the paſſions: They are more to be admired for their variety than force; they have little, either of the pathetic or ſublime; and the images which they leave in the mind, ſlip from it, almoſt as haſtily, as the picture from the eye. It is not ſo with the paintings of Timomachus and Ariſtides; the impreſſions we receive from them ſtrike full upon the ſoul; they dilate it, like the burſts in the muſick of Boranello; they agitate, they rouze it, like the ſymphonies of Yeo-

melli: Such expreſſions, (as was obſerved of the eloquence of Pericles) leave ſtings behind them. The ſuperiority which I have here attributed to the ancients, in the compariſon of their excellencies with thoſe of Raphael, is no way injurious to the latter; it is but placing his merit in a juſt point of view. The epithets of great and divine, ſo conſtantly beſtowed upon him, carry with them every circumſtance of perfection: We may be, and are often led by theſe into wrong judgments: Let us, if you pleaſe, examine his principal works; we have already taken notice of his conduct in the transfiguration, and of his preference of the humbler to the more exalted ſubject; in this he did but obey the true biaſs of his genius: The diſciples, in the abſence of their maſter, had attempted to diſpoſſeſs a demoniac; they failed in their attempt: The painter ſeizes this moment to expreſs their

ſurpriſe

ſurprize and concern at their diſappointment: Their ſentiments on the occaſion, are finely varied: and happily adapted to their different characters. The beauties of this picture are to be felt, not deſcribed; but yet they are beauties of an inferior order [q]. They ſatisfy the underſtanding, but they do not touch the heart.

B. As to your criticiſm on the transfiguration of Chriſt, you muſt conſider, that to have given it its full effect, the ſplendors of the Clear obſcure, muſt have co-operated with the ſublime in the idea: For this reaſon, it is probable, Raphael did not care to engage himſelf too far in ſuch a ſubject. Had he conceived, that he was unequal to the ſublime, he never would have attempted the hiſtory of the creation.

[q] In affectibus fere plus calor, quam diligentiæ valet. Quint.

A. A SUBJECT great in conception, may become little in the execution. God the Creator, preſiding in the center of the univerſe, and ordering by his mighty fiat, the ſun and moon to break into exiſtence, is a ſubject truly ſublime: But, when this is repreſented, [*r*] by the figure of a man, ſuſpended in the air, with one hand on the ſun, and the other on the moon, that, which was noble to the imagination, is trifling to the eye. The immenſity of our idea ſhrinks

[*r*] The littleneſs of this idea will beſt appear, by comparing it with ſuch as are truly great,

Ride forth, and bid the deep,
Within appointed bounds be heaven and earth.

And in immediate conſequence,

Firſt in his eaſt the glorious lamp was ſeen,
Regent of day. Par. Loſt.

Such a ſubject as this will not admit of a mechanick image; we have a proof of this, when the ſame poet unhappily puts a compaſs into the hands of the Almighty Agent.

to

to nothing, reduced to a world of a few inches. The ſubject, therefore, was injudiciouſly choſen, and poorly treated. In the ſame manner, when we reflect on that act, when God commanded the animals of the earth, to ſpring from duſt into life, we are filled with the higheſt conception of his power; but, when we ſee, in the midſt of numberleſs beaſts, an old man, with eyes of diminiſhed luſtre, a wrinkled forehead, a long beard, and his robe hanging to the ground, we may acknowledge the venerable Merlin, but we have no lines of our Creator. Such ſymptoms of caducity do not ſuit with the divine nature; if he is to be repreſented, it muſt be, by a ſublime idea, a character of majeſty more than human; ſuch as was imagined by Homer, and executed by Phidias.

B. PLUTARCH

B. [*s*] PLUTARCH ſuppoſes ſuch an idea in the Alexander of Apelles, perſonating Jupiter the Thunderer; which, according to this writer, was painted with ſuch energy and truth, that it "gave occaſion to a "ſaying, that there were two Alexanders, "the one of Philip, invincible; the other "of Apelles, inimitable."[a] We learn from the ſame author, that Lyſippus was no leſs ingenious than ſublime, when he drew from a ſlight inclination of the neck, which was natural to Alexander, the hint of a great expreſſion; repreſenting him looking up to heaven, with that manly boldneſs, that commanding majeſty, which are thus happily marked by the epigrammatiſt [*t*].

[*s*] Ἐγραψε τον κεκτυπωμενον ουτως ενεργως και κινουμενως, ωστε λεγειν, ὁτι δυοιν Αλεξανδρων, ὁ μεν Φιλιππου γενοιτο ανικητος, ὁ δε Απελλου αμιμητος. De Fort. vel Virt. M. Alex. p. 335. Ed. Paris.

[*t*] Αυδασουσι δ' ἐοικεν ὁ χαλκειος εις Δια λευσσων·
Γαιῃ υπ' εμοι τιθεμαι, Ζευ, συ δ' ολυμπον ἐχε.

Let

Let us divide, O Jove! the conqueror cries:
I lord of earth, thou, tyrant of the skies.

A. We muſt not expect ſuch expreſſions as theſe from the pencil of Raphael; would you ſee him in his true character, obſerve where the angel turns our firſt parents out of paradiſe; it is plain, that he acts in obedience to a command; he lays his finger gently on the ſhoulder of Adam, and marks, by a certain tenderneſs of action, a compaſſion of their paſt weakneſs, and preſent miſery. It is in tracing theſe ſlight and leſs obvious movements of the mind, that this amiable painter ſhows the true beauty of his genius; more excellent, perhaps, in expreſſing ſuch feelings, in that he was not tranſported by the more violent. I have now brought you into the gallery of the Vatican; we muſt enter the apartments; though we have little to do there; for, of all

all the works of Raphael, theſe the moſt celebrated for the painting, are the leaſt to be noted for expreſſion. An aſſembly of Chriſtian doctors, or of Heathen philoſophers, are ſubjects of no motion. Heliodorus driven by angels out of the temple, promiſes expreſſion; but his terror is a grimace. When the angel viſits St. Peter in priſon, we might reaſonably expect, in the countenance and action of the ſaint, ſome kind of emotion; how do we find him? faſt aſleep; could Giotto have done leſs? In the action of Attila, indeed, there is ſomewhat of dignity and ſpirit; but it would diſtreſs the moſt ſanguine admirers of Raphael, to produce, from this ſeries of painting, ſuch examples of the pathetic or ſublime, as might entitle him to be ranked with the firſt painters of antiquity.

B. I SHALL

B. I SHALL excuſe your entering on a particular examination of the hiſtory of Pſyche, or the banquet of the gods; perſuaded, that you would find the paintings at the palace Chigi, as deſtitute of the expreſſions you look for, as you have already found thoſe of the Vatican. Yet we muſt acknowledge an uncommon energy and ſpirit in the flight of Mercury; and it has been obſerved, that the painter has, with wonderful art, given to Pluto, Neptune, and Jupiter, diſtinct characters, yet preſerved in all a brotherly likeneſs.

A. IT would have done more honour to his art, had he expreſſed in any one of them a great idea; the conceptions of Euphranor were very different on a like occaſion; [*u*]

[*u*] Qui cum Athenis duodecim Deos pingeret, Neptuni imaginem quam poterat excellentiſſimis majeſtatis coloribus complexus eſt, perinde ac Jovis ali-

"who, being employed at Athens, to paint "the twelve gods; expreſſed in Neptune "the higheſt idea of majeſty, with a deſign "to make the Jupiter ſtill more noble; "but having exhauſted the force of his "imagination in the former character, he "could not riſe in the latter to the point "which he ambitioned." It will be eaſily allowed, that the failure of Euphranor, was more glorious, than the ſucceſs of Raphael: The firſt, hurried away by the impetuoſity of his genius, aims at a flight beyond the reach of humanity: The ſecond, ſecure in the mildneſs of his ſpirit, hovers within the circle of his calm conceptions. [x] We may, according to Plutarch, be pleaſed by

quanto auguſtiorem repræſentaturus; ſed omni impetu cogitationis in ſuperiore opere abſumpto, poſteriores ejus conatus aſſurgere quo tendebant, nequiverant. Val. Max. lib. viii. c. 11.

[x] Το μεν γαρ ασφαλες παιτιλαι μονον, το δε παιτιλαι δυιον και θαυμα ζηλαι. Plut. de educat. liberorum.

the one, but the other excites our wonder and admiration.

B. SINCE we have had ſo little ſatisfaction, in the point of expreſſion, from the paintings at the Vatican, and the palace Chigi, let us examine the deſigns, or, as they commonly are called, the cartons of Raphael. For, whatever ſhare his ſcholars may have had in the execution, we can have no doubt, but that the compoſitions were taken wholly from his drawings.

A. IF the errors in drawing, and inequalities in the ſeveral parts, mark, beyond a doubt, the pencil of the ſcholars; the variety and truth of the expreſſions prove, with equal force, both the hand and genius of the maſter. Let us trace the latter in Chriſt's charge to Peter; the keys are no ſooner delivered, or the preference given, than we

perceive the different effects manifeſt in the countenance and geſtures of the ſeveral diſciples: The two foremoſt approve the action; the one, with the calmneſs of age and judgment, the other, with the eagarneſs of youth and paſſion. Of the two, which follow, the one has his eyes fixed earneſtly on the face of Chriſt: The ſecond, ſeems ſuſpended between ſelf-love and the juſtice of the choice. The remaining ſix are divided into two groupes; in the former of which, the foremoſt figure, of a bilious and meager temperament, looks haſtily for the agreement of the next to him; who, of a quite different complexion, ſeems loſt in a ſimple and implicit admiration: Whilſt the third, piqued at their approbation, marks by an impatience in his looks, and a reſtleſsneſs of action, how ill ſatisfied he is with the preference given to Peter. The laſt groupe conſiſts, like the former, of three figures;

figures; the hindmoſt is, by a concealment of his countenance and action, withdrawn, as it were, from the ſcene. This gives a kind of repoſe to the imagination, and adds a ſpirit to the expreſſions in the other two; of whom, one, under a knit brow and forced compoſure, ſwells with a ſullen diſcontent; but the other, of a more active and fiery nature, breaks out into an open and ungoverned expreſſion of envy. Upon the whole, if we conſider the ſimplicity of the ſubject, the variety and judicious contraſts in the characters, the juſtneſs and delicacy in the expreſſions, we muſt confeſs, that, however unequal Raphael may be to the enthuſiaſm and pathetic of the antique, he is an abſolute maſter of the ſubordinate affections; and admirable, in tracing through middle life, the various and ſubtile workings of character. It would take up too much of our time, to go through the ſeveral in-

ſtances of the ſagacity and conduct of this painter; yet one is ſo ſingular in its kind, that I cannot paſs it in ſilence. When the inhabitants of Lyſtra are about to offer ſacrifice to Paul and Barnabas, it was neceſſary to let us into the cauſe of all the motion and hurry before us; accordingly, the cripple, whom they had miraculouſly healed, appears in the crowd: Obſerve the means which the painter has uſed, to diſtinguiſh this object, and, of courſe, to open the ſubject of his piece. His crutches, now uſeleſs, are thrown to the ground; his attitude is that of one accuſtomed to ſuch a ſupport, and ſtill doubtful of his limbs; the eagerneſs, the impetuoſity with which he ſolicits his benefactors, to accept the honours deſtined for them, point out his gratitude, and the occaſion of it: During th e time that he is thus buſied, an elderly citizen, of ſome conſequence by his appearance, draws near,

and

and lifting up the corner of his veſt, ſurveys with aſtoniſhment the limb newly reſtored; whilſt a man of middle age, and a youth, looking over the ſhoulder of the cripple, are intent on the ſame object. The wit of man could not deviſe means more certain of the end propoſed; ſuch a chain of circumſtances is equal to a narration: And, I cannot but think, that the whole would have been an example of invention and conduct, even in the happieſt age of antiquity.

B. You have at length done juſtice to our great modern; and, it ſhould ſeem to me, from the light you have thrown on this ſubject, that the true difference between the ancients and him, conſiſts in this, that the former drew the paſſions to a point, collecting the powers of painting to one ſingle and forcible expreſſion; whilſt the genius of Raphael, more placid and diffuſed, illu-

mines and is reflected by numberleſs objects.

A. WE may add to your obſervation another reaſon why the paintings of the ancients had greater effect than thoſe of the moderns; they poſſeſſed more parts: Let me explain myſelf. In order to have a juſt idea of the different parts of painting, we are obliged to ſtudy different maſters; for colouring, Titian; for the clear obſcure, Correggio; for deſign and compoſition, Raphael: It will not be denied, that, had the laſt of theſe, united to his own the excellencies of the other two, his works would have had more the air of truth; and (which is the end of all imitative arts) ſtood more naturally in the place of the things which they repreſent: It is this nearneſs to truth, or excellency in the mechanic, which impoſes on our ſenſes, and gives its powers to the ideal: Now,

Now, I am inclined to believe, that the firſt painters of Greece were no leſs perfect in the one than in the other. I think we have proved this in Apelles and Parrhaſius; Let us therefore ſuppoſe the merits of Titian, Correggio, and Raphael, united to the grace, beauty, and ſublime of the antique, we ſhall then have an idea of conſummate painting; and our imagination may bring before us, the Helen of Zeuxis, the Alexander of Apelles, and the Medea of Timomachus.

B. I HAVE heard it maintained by profeſſors in the art, that it was impoſſible that any one perſon ſhould excel in all the ſeveral branches of painting: affirming, that it was above the condition of humanity; and, that the time and labour beſtowed on ſome, muſt always be at the expence and to the diminution of the others.

A. THIS recalls to my mind an image, I have ſomewhere met with, of a man, who, lying under a covering that is too ſhort, no ſooner ſecures his breaſt, but he muſt bare his feet; and this will be the event in both caſes, where the genius or covering is ſcanty. But it will not be ſo, in men of quick and great abilities. I think we may prove this from the progreſs of Raphael. He no ſooner ſaw the cartons of Michael Angelo, and Leonardo da Vinci, than he dropped, in a great meaſure, the dryneſs of his maſter Perrugino; and blending the boldneſs of the firſt, with his own delicacy, ſtruck out a ſtyle of deſign more perfect than his model: In the ſame manner, and at the ſame time, his colouring was much improved by his imitation of Fran. Bartolomeo; his compoſition, by the ideas he caught from Maſſaccio; and the clear obſcure of the

the Florentine ſchool, ſuch as it was, he made his own. The misfortune of Raphael was, not that his genius was weak, but, that his examples were imperfect: The eaſe with which he ſurpaſſed theſe, ſhews, that he was equal to greater: Had he ſeen the tender carnation in the Venus of Titian; the enchantment of clear obſcure in the nativity of Correggio; his ready and comprehenſive ſpirit would ſoon have united them to his own deſign and compoſition: Of the laſt, he was in a great meaſure the inventor; it is no wonder then, as he died very young, that the beſt part of his life was employed in the improvement of them. But this was not the caſe with the greateſt painters of antiquity: Apelles had all the advantages, which Raphael wanted; inſtead of Perugino, he had a Pamphilus to his maſter; he had excellent examples in each part of painting. In deſign, Phidias

and Polycletus; in colouring and the clear obſcure, Zeuxis and Parrhaſius; in compoſition, [z] the happy ideas of the laſt, joined to the ingenuity of Timanthes: And, as incitements to his ambition, the friendſhip of Alexander, the emulation of Protogenes, the examples and counſels of Praxiteles and Lyſippus.

B. WHATEVER might have been the reſult of theſe advantages; how excellent ſo ever Apelles and his cotemporaries, in giving the utmoſt beauty and energy to a ſingle idea; you will allow, that, in mixed and varied compoſitions, Raphael is much their ſuperior; a merit, which in the eyes of many critics, will counterbalance the ſublime and pathetic of the ancients.

A. I HAVE admitted, that it was much the taſte of the Greek painters, to reſt the merit of their compoſitions on a ſingle cha-

[z] Τα Παζεασιυ σοφισματα.

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racter or expreſſion. That they judged well in this, the agreement of all the writers of antiquity, in giving the preference to theſe works, ſufficiently proves. No doubt, the nobleſt end of painting, is, by a ſudden and powerful impreſſion, to ſtrike home on the paſſions: This will never be effected, in painting, by drawing the imagination through links of ſucceſſive ideas. The children of Medea, we are told, were repreſented ſmiling at the dagger in their mother's hand; her fury, mixed with a pity of their innocence, has been fully deſcribed: Would you extend compoſition beyond this, you rather weaken than improve it; is it to be imagined, that a painter, capable of ſuch expreſſions as theſe, could not have marked the ſubordinate emotions in a number of aſſiſtants? We have already taken notice, in the Iphigenia of Timanthes, of the Climax in the expreſſions; and of his ſingu-

lar ingenuity, in diſtinguiſhing his principal character; can we ſuppoſe this artiſt unequal to trace the gradations of envy in Chriſt's charge to Peter, or the different effects of Paul's ſermon at Athens?

B. I MUST interrupt you a moment; you have affirmed, that in the pathetic, painting has little advantage from a climax in the ideas; yet, poetry and muſick move the paſſions, by a quick and growing ſucceſſion of impreſſions; the images of the one, and vibrations of the other, gentle at firſt, accumulate, and preſs upon us, with ſuch an impetuous re-iteration, as bears all before it.

A. THIS progreſs is juſt inverted in painting; the whole production is at once before us; our attention is immediately fixed on the moſt intereſting expreſſion; when we have

have ſtudied, and felt the powers of this, we then, and not till then, deſcend to the examination of the inferior movements: Thus, when we enter into an aſſembly of women, ſhould there be one amongſt them of diſtinguiſhed beauty, the eye dwells with conſtancy on her; and having taken in all her advantages, paſſes to a careleſs obſervation of the reſt. It is evident, in both theſe caſes, that the ſuperior character acts with an intrinſick, and not a relative force.

B. BUT we may ſuppoſe a ſubject, in which there may be many capital expreſſions; for example, the ſlaughter of the innocents.

A. IN this caſe, ſome one more happy would overbear the reſt; or, ſhould they be more juſtly dealt with, the equality of their pretenſions, would weaken their ſeveral effects:

fects: At beſt, the time neceſſary to combine all the ideas and feelings peculiar to each, would deſtroy any effect, which might be hoped for, from the ſucceſſion of their impreſſions; ſo that, each could act but as a ſeperate picture; and this is the reaſon, why painting can never tranſport the imagination, or ſtimulate the ſenſe, ſo powerfully as poetry or muſick: [*a*] For, though

[*a*] When Venus appears to her ſon on the coaſt of Africk, beauty of perſon, grace of action, tenderneſs of expreſſion, with all the aids of dreſs, attributes, and diſtinction of clear obſcure, are by the painter urged in the ſame inſtant on the imagination. In poetry, theſe ideas are ſucceſſive, and (which proves the advantage of painting) the more quickly they ſucceed, the more perfect is the deſcription; I may add to this, that grace and beauty, ſtrike more warmly on the ſenſe, in their actual appearance, than by any images formed of them by words; ſo that, by as much as the real appearance would be ſuperior to paint, by ſo much is paint in this particular ſuperior to poetry.

But the poet has ample amends; he can renew and vary thoſe impreſſions at will; he can lengthen out

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it has greatly the advantage of either in the impreſſion of the inſtant, as it unites more circumſtances in that one point of time; yet it falls ſhort of both, in the quickneſs and power of repeating its ideas.

his action by a chain of the moſt intereſting circumſtances: He can do more; he can call all the ſenſes to his aid, and improve his pictures of beauty, by a voice tuned to a heavenly ſweetneſs, or air breathing a divine fragrance. Dryden has marked the advantage of this coalition of the ſenſes.

The hearing gave new pleaſure to the ſight,
And both to thought.

Milton has inſinuated the ſame in the following words, addreſſed by Adam to the angel, and, in the ſweetneſs of his numbers, ſtill breathes on our ears the angelic accents.

For, while I ſit with thee, I ſeem in heav'n,
And ſweeter thy diſcourſe is to my ear
Than fruits of palm-tree, pleaſanteſt to thirſt
And hunger both.

As to the ſecond advantage I mentioned, every reader feels, how much the following idea adds to the beauty, and aſcertains the divinity of Venus.

B. BUT

B. BUT, does not the very inſtance you have given, in the Iphigenia of Timanthes ſhew the advantage of a gradation in the expreſſions; and of courſe, contradict all that you have oppoſed to it?

A. HAD the paſſion of grief been actually expreſſed in the countenance of Agamemnon, the caſe would have been preciſely as I ſtated it juſt now: But his face being hid, and his feelings left wholly to our imagination, our attention fixes firſt on thoſe expreſſions, which are the objects of ſenſe, and riſes from the real to a conception of the

" *Ambroſiæque comæ divinum vertice odorem*
" *Spiravere.*

The ſame effect is ſenſible in Milton's deſcription of the angel Raphael, alighting on the earth.

Like Maia's ſon he ſtood;
And ſhook his plumes, that heavenly fragrance filled
The circuit wide.

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imaginary. Now this, you ſee, is not a matter of expreſſion, but a ſtroke of ingenuity; which, as well as all the delicate, and leſs obſervable motions of the mind, are often found to owe their evidence and force to their aſſociate ideas. Thus, tho' in addreſſes to the paſſions, the ancients, intent on giving the utmoſt force to the primary idea, made uſe of but few acceſſories; they obſerved a quite different method, when the addreſs was to the imagination. What ſpirit; what variety? what a fund of invention, in the marriage of Alexander and Roxana, as painted by Aëtion, and deſcribed by Lucian? The playful and wanton compoſitions of Albani, are but roſes pulled from this tree. We find in the ſame author, the deſcription of the Centaur of Zeuxis: How excellent in the mechanic? what novelty, what boldneſs in the ideal? Let ſuch traits of genius be the character-

iſtic of the antique; I ſhall not diſpute with thoſe, who admire the picturesque diſpoſition, the multiplied characters, and laboured compoſitions of the moderns.

B. I FIND, theſe laſt have in you but a falſe friend; you joined their party juſt now, in the praiſe you gave to Raphael, only to turn upon them with more violence, when the occaſion offered.

A. I AM a ſincere admirer of the ſagacity and reſources of Raphael; but I am more moved by one great expreſſion, than by ſeveral minute ones. There is generally, in theſe laſt, ſomething equivocal and undeciſive; they are often made out more, by the imagination of the beholders, than by the pencil of the painter: To ſome, they convey imperfect ideas; to others, different. I hardly have known any two agree in

in the ſentiments which they imputed to the ſeveral auditors of St. Paul. I attempted juſt now a hiſtory of the feelings of the diſciples, on the preference given to Peter; ſome are obvious; but it is poſſible you may differ from me in many others. At beſt, they muſt be ſtudied to be underſtood; this weakens and ſubdivides the effect: It is not ſo in the pathetic, or ſublime. In the dying mother of Ariſtides, the Medea of Timomachus, the Alexander of Apelles, the ideas are manifeſt; the expreſſions deciſive; and, we can no more confound, than we can forget, the effects which they produce——

B. BUT, granting that the chief merit of the arts ſhould, as you ſay, conſiſt in great or forcible expreſſions, are not inſtances of theſe to be found in modern painting?

A. HAD I known of any comparable to thoſe, which I have quoted from the antique, they ſhould certainly have had the preference; for whatever might have given occaſion to theſe diſcourſes, my deſign was, much more, to ſettle our ideas of the art, than the pretenſions of the artiſts.

B. MAY it not be objected, that theſe advantages, which you have ſuppoſed on the ſide of the ancients, might have exiſted more in the deſcriptions, than in the works themſelves?

A. WHEN any work can be produced of modern art, equal, in the ſublime, to the Apollo; in expreſſion, to the Laocoon; in grace and beauty, to the daughter of Niobe; I ſhall allow the force of this objection. With regard to theſe, as I have already

ready obſerved, the cauſe of painting and ſtatuary is the ſame. As to compoſition, the grand point is expreſſion; colouring and the clear obſcure are proper to paint; how far the ancients excelled in theſe, excluſive of all other proofs, might be preſumed from their ſuperior genius, and indefatigable application. And now, I hope you have received, from this inquiry, the ſatisfaction I promiſed you at our firſt ſetting out. Our purſuit has not been altogether technical; a fine idea, whether it be conveyed in colours or words, tends equally to improve and enlighten the imagination; and, you cannot but have obſerved all along, a conſtant and pleaſing reſemblance, in the conceptions of the Greek artiſts, to thoſe of their poets. The ſame ſtyle of greatneſs, the ſame ſtrokes of tenderneſs, the ſame vein of elegance and ſimplicity ſhine through and beautify their works.

B. THIS

B. THIS may well be expected from the known analogy in the operations and powers of the two arts: Hence it is, that we can with juſtneſs transfer from one to the other the terms proper to each; and, as poetry is often but the colouring of words, ſo painting may be ſtyled the eloquence of colours.

A. THE lively and natural effects of painting, are in nothing more ſenſible, than in the delight the poets take, in borrowing their images and metaphors from her. Hence they learn to groupe and arrange their objects; to ſhade and illumine their figures; to draw the outlines of grace; to lay on the tints of beauty; and all the colouring of words brightens as from the touches of the pencil. This correſpondence prevails, not only in what relates to

deſcription, but even in the very eſſentials of each art. Was I to obſerve, that there were grace and beauty in the perſons; juſtneſs in the ſentiments; warmth and ſpirit in the paſſions; I at once deſcribe a good poem, or a good picture. As it is the character of fine writing, ſo it is of excellent painting, that the thoughts ſhould be natural, not obvious; elegant, not remote. [*b*] A Greek artiſt, having painted a naval engagement on the river Nile, it was neceſſary to mark the ſcene of action; to this end, he repreſented an aſs feeding on its bank, beneath which was couched a crocodile, ready to ſpring upon his prey. A modern would have planted at one end a river god, with water iſſuing from ſeven urns; and this, with no ſmall conceit of his erudition. The ſame ſimplicity and happineſs of invention are attributed in gene-

[*b*] Nealces, ingenioſus et ſolers in arte. Plin. lib. xxxv. c. 12.

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ral to the paintings of Timanthes; in one of which, he repreſented, in a little picture, a cyclops ſleeping, and, to give an extraordinary idea of his ſize, near him were drawn ſome ſatyrs, meaſuring his finger with a thyrſus. On which occaſion, Pliny makes this remark, "[c] In all his works "there is more underſtood than expreſſed; "and though his execution be maſterly, "yet his ideas exceed it." This is, in ſo many words, a deſcription of the poetry of Virgil. A circumſtance, extremely favourable to the Greek artiſts, that the praiſes due to that divine poet, ſhould be no leſs applicable to this excellent painter.

[c] In omnibus ejus operibus intelligitur plus ſemper quam pingitur; et cum ars ſumma ſit, ingenium tamen ultra artem eſt. Lib. xxxv. c. 10.

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